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Contextualization of the Gospel to American Muslims: A Proposal for a Seventh-day Adventist Evangelization Model

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Southern Adventist University
School of Religion

CONTEXTUALIZATION OF THE GOSPEL TO AMERICAN MUSLIMS:
A PROPOSAL FOR A SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST
EVANGELIZATION MODEL

A Thesis
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in Religion

by
Myckal Morehouse

August 2017

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Dedicated to the glory of God and to the advancement of His
Church. To my wife, Delaney, and children, Joshua and
Abigail, who pressed forward with me.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In the era of globalization, missiologists are seeking to find new ways of spreading the gospel. This is because thousands of different people groups are coming to live in the major cities of the world. This presents christian churches an opportunity to literally reach the world within their own neighborhood or cities.¹ What does this mean for missions to Muslims?

Research indicates that Islam is growing rapidly in the United States,² with an estimated three to seven million adherents in the United States alone.³ To put that into perspective, the North American Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church counts its membership at just over one

¹Paul Everett Pierson, *The Dynamics of Christian Mission: History Through a Missiological Perspective* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey International University Press, 2009), 41.

²"Growth of Religion," *Wikipedia*, July 2, 2017; http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Growth_of_religion#Islam (accessed July 10, 2017). Lipka agrees, adding that Islam is growing faster than all other religions globally. Michael Lipka, "Muslims and Islam: Key findings in the U.S. and around the world" *Pew Research Center*, August 9, 2017; <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/08/09/muslims-and-islam-key-findings-in-the-u-s-and-around-the-world/> (accessed August 14, 2017).

³Lipka. Martin quotes from a Muslim source that estimates as many as seven million Muslims in the United States. Carlos G. Martin, *Christianity Among the Religions of the World* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2007), 289.

million members.⁴ This means that there are three to seven times as many Muslims in the United States as there are Seventh-day Adventists in the entire North American Division. In light of Islam's increase in the West, Samuel Escobar, a Peruvian missiologist, gave this commentary:

One of the most significant trends in recent years is the resurgence of Islam, making it one of the greatest missionary challenges of today Islam is now a rival of Christianity even in the heart of cities in Europe and the United States.⁵

With this commentary in mind, it is imperative that missiologists confront the issues of reaching Islam not only in a Middle Eastern or Southeast Asian context, but now in the context of Western nations such as Europe and the United States. This paper seeks to address the missiological issue of contextualization within the context of Islam in the United States and provide a Seventh-day Adventist evangelization model to reach Muslims within the United States.

⁴General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, "Annual Charts and Statistics," *Seventh-day Adventist Church Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research*; http://www.adventiststatistics.org/view_Summary.asp?FieldID=D_NAD (accessed May 19, 2015).

⁵Samuel Escobar, *The New Global Mission: The Gospel from Everywhere to Everyone* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 81-82.

Statement of Problem

Although there may be a strong case for focusing mission efforts on Muslims living within the United States, there still remains the challenge of defining how missions should be conducted. For more than 20 years, missiologists have wrestled primarily with the issue of Muslim identity as it relates to Christian missions.⁶ How much of Islamic culture, customs, language, and beliefs are converts allowed to retain? Do converts need to identify themselves as Christian, or is it allowable for them to retain their Muslim identity while accepting certain doctrines of the Christian faith? If they can retain their identity, which doctrines are essential, and which are non-essential? Regarding these types of questions, Peter Roennfeldt, a Seventh-day Adventist Church planter, stated that "a major challenge to both individual witness and official dialogue is a lack of any consensus on how Adventists should relate to Muslims."⁷ This lack of clarity poses a real problem for missions.

How missiologists and Muslims have chosen to respond to these questions has resulted in various Christ-centered

⁶Timothy Tennent, "The Hidden History of Insider Movements," *Christianity Today* 57, no. 1 (January/February 2013): 28; <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2013/january-february/hidden-history-of-insider-movements.html?start=1> (accessed July 20, 2015).

⁷Peter Roennfeldt, "Faith Development in Context: An Overview," in *Faith Development in Context: Symposium Papers*, ed. Bruce L. Bauer (Berrien Springs, MI: Department of World Mission, Andrews University, 2005), 32.

communities being formed. These different Christ-centered communities each "contextualize their new faith in Christ along a spectrum."⁸ For some within the Seventh-day Adventist Church, C-5 missions, which represents the far end of the spectrum (now re-labeled as Faith Development in Context), pose a threat to the identity and mission of the Church.⁹ Others, however, have taken an approach that sees remnant theology in a way which is inclusive to other religions, rather than exclusive to the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and view C-5 missions as a new way of seeing our identity and mission as a church.¹⁰ Jerald

⁸Tennent, "The Hidden History," 28. The C-1 to C-6 spectrum was first published by John Travis in the *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*. John Travis, "The C1 to C6 Spectrum: A Practical Tool for Defining Six Types of 'Christ-Centered Communities' ('C') Found in the Muslim Context," *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 34, no. 4 (October 1998): 407-408. His work has become a foundational element in the current debate regarding contextualization of the gospel among Muslims and is often cited by missiologists such as Joshua Massey, Phil Parshall, Ralph Winter, Timothy Tennent, and Carlos Martin, among others. Joshua Massey, "God's Amazing Diversity in Drawing Muslims to Christ," *International Journal of Frontier Mission* (2000) 17:1. Phil Parshall, "Going too Far?" in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*, eds. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne, (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1999), 664. Ralph Winter, "Going Far Enough?" in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, eds. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne, (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1999), 670. Timothy Tennent, "Followers of Jesus (Isa) in Islamic Mosques: A Closer Examination of C-5 'High Spectrum' Contextualization," *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 23, no. 3 (2006): 103. Carlos Martin, "Biblical and Organizational Models for Contextualization Among Muslims," in *Asia-Africa Journal of Mission and Ministry*, Vol. 2 (Seoul, Korea: Mission and Society Research Institute, 2010): 7.

⁹Carlos G. Martin, "An Adventist Theology of Mission and Evangelism" (Collegedale, TN: College Press, 2009), 314.

¹⁰Jon L. Dybdahl, "Doing Theology in Mission," in *Faith Development in Context: Symposium Papers*, ed. Bruce L. Bauer (Berrien Springs, MI: Department of World Mission, Andrews University, 2005), 15.

Whitehouse says, "This approach to Adventist-Muslim relations requires that we take another look at our mission and ourselves."¹¹ Either way, what is at stake is the identity and mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and for this reason the issue of contextualization is a problem that must be addressed.

Purpose of Study

In order to address the above issue, this paper will define a theology of mission, address how the unique identity and mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church relates to contextualization, and survey the spectrum of contextualization that exists within the Church. Only then can a biblically appropriate Seventh-day Adventist approach to contextualization be synthesized from this spectrum. The ultimate goal of this research is to provide a biblically appropriate contextualized Seventh-day Adventist approach which preserves the identity and mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, while effectively reaching American Muslims with the gospel.

¹¹Jerald Whitehouse, "Relating to Muslims: An Adventist View," *Ministry International Journal for Pastors*, October 2001, 20; <https://www.ministrymagazine.org/archives/2001/MIN2001-10.pdf> (accessed July 21, 2015). Dybdahl is in complete agreement with Whitehouse in seeing a need for a change in the Church's identity and mission. He wrote, "I suggest that we must recognize three core changes that have taken place in our world and begin, as much as possible, to adjust our mission practices to them. These core changes are a new context, a new mode, and a new identity." Dybdahl, "Doing Theology," 10.

Relevance and Motivation for Study

Islam is the second largest¹² and fastest-growing religion in the world.¹³ Not only is it growing worldwide, but Islam is growing rapidly in the United States.¹⁴ Islam has also been identified as one of the least evangelized religious groups.¹⁵ These facts present an impetus for missions to Muslims living in the United States, as well as a motivation for studies into effective evangelistic models for reaching Muslims.

One model which seems to have experienced success in reaching Muslims in the Middle East was introduced to Adventist missions by Jerald Whitehouse.¹⁶ This new model of contextualization has been criticized by some who see a danger that threatens the distinctive mission and identity of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.¹⁷ Others have praised this new model, seeing in it evidence that the Church must

¹²Martin, *Christianity*, 265.

¹³Brian J. Grim, and Mehtab S. Karim, "The Future of the Global Muslim Population," *Pew Research Center*, January 27, 2011, 13; <http://www.pewforum.org/2011/01/27/the-future-of-the-global-muslim-population/> (accessed July 22, 2015).

¹⁴"Growth of Religion."

¹⁵Bruce L. Bauer and Lester Merklin, "The Unfinished Task," *Journal of Adventist Mission Studies* 3, no. 1 (2007): 41.

¹⁶Jerald Whitehouse, "Contextual Adventist Mission to Islam: A Working Model" in *The Three Angels and the Crescent: A Reader*, eds. Jonquil Hole and Borge Schantz (Bracknell, Berkshire, England: SDA Global Centre for Islamic Studies, 1993), 245.

¹⁷Martin, "An Adventist Theology," 301.

follow the Holy Spirit's leading and change its current identity and mission to fit the most effective model.¹⁸ Deciphering an appropriate response is essential to Adventism's witness to Muslims. These factors all combine to form the relevance and motivation for this paper.

Survey of Literature

The evangelization models that form the core of this paper are based on the initial work of John Travis, who developed a scale that reveals various Muslim communities that are formed based on contextualized outreach.¹⁹ This scale has been used by Joshua Massey²⁰ and Timothy Tennent,²¹ as well as Adventist scholars such as Jon Paulien²² and Carlos Martin.²³ Travis is generally in favor of C-5 missions according to his scale,²⁴ as is Joshua Massey²⁵ and

¹⁸Dybdahl, "Doing Theology," 15-16.

¹⁹Travis, "The C1 to C6 Spectrum," 407-408.

²⁰Massey, 5-12.

²¹Tennent, "The Hidden History," 28.

²²Jon Paulien, "Dealing with Syncretism in Insider Movements," in *Faith Development in Context*, ed. Bruce L. Bauer (Berrien Springs, MI: Department of World Mission, Andrews University, 2005), 217.

²³Martin, "An Adventist Theology," 300.

²⁴John Travis, "Must all Muslims leave Islam to follow Jesus?" *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 34:4 (1998):411-415.

²⁵Massey, 13-14.

Ralph Winter.²⁶ Those who are opposed to C-5 missions are Timothy Tennent,²⁷ Mark S. Williams,²⁸ and Phil Parshall.²⁹ These seem to be the major non-Adventist Christian scholars who weigh in on the debate regarding C-5 Muslim communities.

Among Seventh-day Adventist scholars, Jerald Whitehouse has been a pioneer in C-5 types of missions.³⁰ Jon Dybdahl,³¹ Bruce Bauer,³² and Peter Roennfeldt³³ are in agreement with Whitehouse. Carlos Martin,³⁴ Edwin Reynolds,³⁵

²⁶Winter, "Going Far Enough," 670-671. John Travis, "Messianic Muslim Followers of Isa: A Closer Look at C5 Believers and Congregations," *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 17, no. 1 (2000): 55.

²⁷Tennent, "Followers of Jesus (Isa)," 103.

²⁸Mark S. Williams, "Revisiting the C1-C6 spectrum in Muslim contextualization," *Missiology* 39, no. 3 (2011): 346.

²⁹Phil Parshall, "Danger! New Directions in Contextualization," *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, 34, no. 4 (October 1998): 405.

³⁰Whitehouse, "Contextual Adventist Mission," 247.

³¹Dybdahl, "Doing Theology," 15.

³²Bruce Bauer, "Maintaining Unity with Parallel Structures," in *Faith Development in Context*, ed. Bruce Bauer (Berrien Springs, MI: Department of World Mission, Andrews University, 2005), 273.

³³Roennfeldt, 35.

³⁴Martin, "An Adventist Theology," 306.

³⁵Edwin Reynolds, "New Testament Principles and Models for Ethical Contextualization of Missions," a paper presented at the Eighth Biblical-Theological Symposium for the Faculty of Theology at the Adventist University of Chile, Chillan, Chile, May 18-20, 2009, 11.

and Borge Schantz³⁶ disagree with Whitehouse and others who promote C-5 as an end mission goal.

One of the major differences in how C-5 missions are viewed is based on how the Bible itself is viewed, either from a low or high view of Scripture.³⁷ Martin, taking a high view of Scripture, sees appropriate mission practice as a result of a biblical theology of mission.³⁸ Gailyn Van Rheenen³⁹ and Arthur L. Glasser⁴⁰ agree in appealing to a biblical theology of mission as the root of mission practice. Dybdahl⁴¹ and Bertil Wiklander⁴² prefer to see a biblical theology of mission more as a result of mission practice and culture, so that what is happening in missions today and current culture are the preeminent guides in understanding what is appropriate in missions.

³⁶Borge Schantz, "The Hanif Model in Muslim Evangelism: Cruse of Oil or Potential Powder-keg? Observations, Considerations and Concerns of a Missiologist," 20.

³⁷Martin, "Biblical and Organizational," 5.

³⁸Ibid., "An Adventist Theology," 7.

³⁹Gailyn Van Rheenen, *Missions: Biblical Foundations and Contemporary Strategies* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 138.

⁴⁰Arthur F. Glasser, "The Whole-Bible Basis of Mission," in *Contemporary Theologies of Missions*, eds. Arthur F. Glasser and Donald McGavran (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1983), 30.

⁴¹Dybdahl, "Doing Theology," 1-2.

⁴²Bertil Wiklander, "The Fundamental Beliefs and Globalization," in *Adventist Responses to Cross-Cultural Mission*, Vol. 2, ed. Bruce Bauer (Berrien Springs, MI: Department of World Mission, Andrews University, 2007), 5.

Methodology and Procedure

This study will critically evaluate the tension of C-5 missions within the Seventh-day Adventist Church in order to synthesize an appropriate contextualized approach to sharing the gospel with American Muslims. This will necessitate first considering the unique field which the American Muslim population presents to missions. Chapter Two will not only cover their religious beliefs and practices, but also their demographic makeup, their political and social perspectives, and their general views of Christianity. The information in this section will rely upon surveys that have been conducted and will also consider books and articles written that describe the American Muslim population.

Following this, Chapter Three will offer a comparison between the beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists and Muslims. The major reason for this section is to discover areas of agreement and disagreement that will further shape a uniquely Seventh-day Adventist contextualized approach. The information for this section will rely upon books, as well as articles published in journals that deal with the beliefs of both groups. Both Chapters Two and Three provide the background necessary to make an adequate application of

a biblical theology of contextualization, which will be developed in Chapter Four.

Next, Chapter Four will review a biblical theology of contextualization and syncretism in order to guide a critical evaluation of Seventh-day Adventist evangelistic models to Muslims. In particular, the biblical theology of contextualization will aid in specifically evaluating C-5 missions from a Seventh-day Adventist perspective. This theology of contextualization and syncretism will be derived through careful biblical study. However, since this study is also concerned with the unique mission and identity of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the writings of co-founder Ellen G. White will also be examined in order to determine an appropriate form of contextualization that fits the scope of the Church's unique identity and mission. Once an appropriate contextualization model has been researched, Chapter Five will synthesize an appropriate contextualized approach for sharing the gospel with American Muslims.

Delimitations of Study

It is beyond the scope of this paper to consider each of the unique sects of Islam, and therefore this study will be limited to Sunnis. This group represents the largest branch of Islam and has the broadest representation within

the United States.⁴³ Therefore, this paper will focus on established Sunni Muslims in the United States. The issues raised by Muslim refugees deserve separate attention. This study will also primarily focus on the missional efforts and challenges faced by the Seventh-day Adventist Church in their efforts to reach Muslims.

The focus of this paper is limited to the evaluation of issues surrounding contextualization in missions within the United States. It will be based upon a high view of the Bible. All other issues relating to missions are outside the scope of this paper. Finally, this paper is limited to considering a theoretical model of contextualization.

Definition of Terms

"Islam" is a monotheistic world religion, distinct from Christianity and Judaism.

"Muslim" is defined as an adherent to the monotheistic religion of Islam.⁴⁴

"Seventh-day Adventist" is defined as a baptized member of the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist Church.

"The Gospel" is the global message of God's power to save humanity from sin and bring salvation through Jesus

⁴³Martin, *Christianity*, 269-270. There are at least 73 different sects within Islam, with Sunnis representing 80% of the Muslim world.

⁴⁴*New Oxford American Dictionary*, 2nd ed., s.v. "Islam."

Christ to those who believe and obey the gospel (Matt 24:14; Rom 1:16; Acts 4:10-12; John 1:12; Rom 6:16-17).

"The Adventist Message" is the doctrinal message of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, which communicates "the everlasting gospel in the context of the three angels' messages of Revelation 14:6-12."⁴⁵

"Evangelism" is "the presentation of biblical doctrines, in the power of the Holy Spirit, in such a way that people will be persuaded to accept Jesus as Savior, be baptized, and serve Him in the fellowship of the Church."⁴⁶

"Mission" is God's initiation and work to reach lost humanity with the gospel.⁴⁷

"Missions" are "the plans of committed believers to accomplish the mission of God."⁴⁸

"Contextualization" is framing the gospel in ways that are recognizable and acceptable within a particular cultural context.⁴⁹

⁴⁵General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Executive Committee, "Mission Statement of the Seventh-day Adventist Church," (October 13, 2009); <http://www.adventist.org/information/official-statements/statements/article/go/0/mission-statement-of-the-seventh-day-adventist-church/6/> (accessed July 22, 2015).

⁴⁶Martin, *Christianity*, 23.

⁴⁷Van Rheenen, *Missions*, 20.

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹Donald McGavran, "Particular Theologies and Theology of Mission," in *Contemporary Theologies of Missions*, eds. Arthur F. Glasser and Donald McGavran (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1983), 139.

"Syncretism" is "the fusion of two beliefs which compromise biblical doctrines."⁵⁰ Contextualization and syncretism will both be more fully developed in Chapter Four.

⁵⁰Martin, "An Adventist Theology," 274.

CHAPTER 2

THE AMERICAN MUSLIM PERSPECTIVE

American Muslims used to be seen as a small, somewhat insignificant part of Islam, compared to the larger groups represented in Asia and the Middle East. However, the American Muslim community has experienced significant growth, especially among young intellectuals immigrating to the United States.¹ This growth is an encouraging motivation for missiologists to look at avenues to reaching American Muslims, but growth is not the only reason why American Muslims should not be ignored.

Muslim Americans represent a unique group of people, distinct from their co-religionists in other parts of the world. Things that set them apart are their diverse origins, their integration into American society and culture, and even their beliefs and practices. This is due to the freedom and independence that American Muslims enjoy, "away from the watchful eyes of Islamic government."² This freedom allows for greater access to and influence upon the lives of a group of people that is notoriously difficult to reach.

¹Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad, "Introduction: The Muslims of America," in *The Muslims of America*, ed. Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 4.

²Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad and Adair T. Lummis, *Islamic Values in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 23.

This chapter will consider the foundational beliefs and practices of mainstream Islam. Then a survey of American beliefs and practices will be considered. The chapter will conclude by considering how first-, second-, and third-generation American Muslims identify themselves and how they each have assimilated into American culture. This will provide an essential foundation for the chapters which follow.

Theological Viewpoints

The theological views of mainstream Islam did not develop in a vacuum. The conditions of pre-Islamic Arabia were ripe for a new monotheistic religion, and the revelations of Muhammad filled this need. These revelations were collected and bound together in the Qur'an, which Muslims consider to be Allah's "final revelation to mankind."³ Although the Qur'an is considered authoritative, it is not the only authority which shapes the beliefs and practices of Islam. Burke says that "the strongest argument on behalf of any belief or action is that it follows Mohammed's example."⁴ His words are viewed as God's own

³T. Patrick Burke, *The Major Religions: An Introduction with Texts* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 244. The Qur'an was not originally written by Muhammad. He dictated his revelations, which were memorized and written down by his followers. Later, these writings were collected and bound together. Martin, *Christianity*, 269.

⁴Burke, 245.

words being uttered through human lips,⁵ and his life is regarded as sinless.⁶ His life and words, recorded in a *sunna*, as well as reports of what he said or did, recorded in a *hadith*, are authoritative guides for all Muslim beliefs and practices.⁷

So what are the basic beliefs and practices that constitute the American Muslim faith? Surprisingly, the clearest summary of Muslim beliefs and practices is outlined in the Hadith of Gabriel, not in the Qur'an.⁸ The fundamental practices of Islam are known as the Pillars of Islam, and the basic beliefs are known as the Articles of

⁵Vincent J. Cornell, "Fruit of the Tree of Knowledge: The Relationship Between Faith and Practice in Islam," in *The Oxford History of Islam*, ed. John L. Esposito (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 73.

⁶Burke, 245. Alavi expands on Burke's thought, saying that not only is Muhammad considered sinless, but all prophets are considered sinless, capable of making only minor mistakes. Karima Diane Alavi, "Pillars of Religion and Faith" in *Voices of Islam*, Vol. 1, Vincent J. Cornell, ed. (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2007), 37; <https://malikussaleh.files.wordpress.com/2008/09/voices-of-islam-vol-1-5.pdf> (accessed August 4, 2015).

⁷Hamza Yusuf Hanson, "The Sunna: The Way of the Prophet Muhammad," in *Voices of Islam*, Vol. 1, ed. Vincent J. Cornell (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2007), 125. See also Cornell, "Fruit of the Tree," 74. Burke, 244-246. The written record contained in the *sunna* and *hadiths*, is especially important to the Sunni branch of Islam, which "emphasize the authority of the written traditions." Martin, *Christianity*, 270.

⁸Cornell, "Fruit of the Tree," 75. See also Alavi, 33.

Faith.⁹ Both heavily emphasize "a practice-oriented approach to religion."¹⁰

The Six Articles of Faith

The first Article of Faith in Islam is a belief in the oneness of Allah,¹¹ which is known as *Tawhid*.¹² It is the greatest and most important of all doctrines in Islam.¹³ To deny the oneness of Allah is not only the greatest sin in Islam,¹⁴ but it is also the unforgivable sin.¹⁵ This doctrine guides the actions, the words, and even the thoughts of

⁹Alavi, 33. Cornell mentions both the Pillars of Islam and the Articles of Faith as essential, saying that if one were to just declare the *Articles of Faith*, he or she could theoretically remain a Christian or a Jew. Cornell, "Fruit of the Tree," 88.

¹⁰Cornell, "Fruit of the Tree," 88. Martin concurs, seeing all sects of Islam as committed to the practices of Islam. Martin, *Christianity*, 273.

¹¹Alavi, 33. See also Cornell, "Fruit of the Tree," 88.

¹²Alavi, 9. Jane Smith, *Islam in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 6.

¹³Martin, *Christianity*, 272. Burke mentions that although monotheism is shared by Christianity and Judaism, Islam holds this doctrine to a much greater intensity. Burke, 246. Schantz also sees the oneness of God as the greatest belief in Islam. Borge Schantz, *Islam in the Post 9/11 World* (Alma Park, Grantham, Lincolnshire, England: Autumn House, 2003), 55. Haddad and Smith agree, stating that this belief is held by all sects of Islam. Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad and Jane L. Smith, *Mission to America: Five Islamic Sectarian Communities in North America* (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida, 1993), 11.

¹⁴Smith, *Islam in America*, 6. Haddad and Smith agree, saying this sin is known as *shirk*. Haddad and Smith, *Mission to America*, 12. Martin says it is synonymous with blasphemy. Martin, *Christianity*, 272.

¹⁵Alavi sees this as the unforgivable sin because of the immense stress that Islam places on the oneness of God and the separateness of all else from Him. Alavi, 9. Martin, *Christianity*, 272.

Muslims from day to day, which is known as practicing *taqwah*.¹⁶

Closely tied with the first *Article of Faith* is the fourth *Article of Faith*, which is a belief in the prophets.¹⁷ These two beliefs stand at the very foundation of Islam, and are the basis for the first *Pillar of Islam*, the *Shahada*.¹⁸ Belief in the prophets includes more than 313 legitimate messengers and prophets¹⁹ from the Old and New Testaments, as well as prophets unique to the Arab people.²⁰ The last and greatest of all prophets or messengers in

¹⁶Alavi, 33. See also Cornell, "Fruit of the Tree," 96.

¹⁷Alavi, 36. See also Cornell, "Fruit of the Tree," 88. Smith, *Islam in America*, 7. Martin, *Christianity*, 273. Burke, 247.

¹⁸Alavi, 8. Schantz not only sees the tying of these two elements together in the *Shahada* as a declaration of faith in the prophets and God, but also setting Muhammad apart as the premier prophet. Schantz, *Islam in the Post 9/11 World*, 55. See also Cornell, "Fruit of the Tree," 77.

¹⁹Joseph Lumbard, "Prophets and Messengers of God," in *Voices of Islam*, Vol. 1, ed. Vincent J. Cornell (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2007), 106. Martin disagrees with Lumbard, saying that there are as many as 124,000 recognized legitimate prophets. Martin, *Christianity*, 273. Schantz agrees with Martin, saying that this number reflects what is written in the hadith; however, the Qur'an mentions only 28. Schantz, *Islam in the Post 9/11 World*, 72. Burke seems to contradict both Martin and Schantz, saying that the Qur'an lists 25 prophets. Burke, 247. Lumbard says only 24 are mentioned in the Qur'an. Lumbard, 106.

²⁰Alavi, 36. Interestingly, Schantz points out that "only four of the prophets in the Kor'an are Arabs." Schantz, *Islam in the Post 9/11 World*, 72. Also see Cornell, "Fruit from the Tree," 88. Ayoub and Omar agree, saying that Muslims see truth as being progressively revealed through the chain of prophets down through time. Each prophet built upon the truths preached by previous prophets. Mahoud Ayoub and Irfan A. Omar, *A Muslim View of Christianity* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2007), 90. Martin refers to the Muslim belief that these prophets were sent as witnesses to all nations. Martin, *Christianity*, 273.

Islam is Muhammad, who is said to be the "seal of prophecy."²¹ "This doctrine is of such great importance in Islam that for anyone to claim for himself or for another the designation of prophet is considered heresy."²²

Among the long list of prophets in Islam, Jesus is considered one of the great prophets of history, who worked spectacular miracles, such as raising the dead.²³ Muslims accept the teachings of Jesus but naturally reject any associations of Jesus with God.²⁴ However, they do accord Him a very special and unique position among the prophets. They see Him and His mother as the only two human beings recorded as sinless in the Qur'an.²⁵

²¹Alavi, 37. See also Smith, *Islam in America*, 7. Lings mentions that when Muhammad was a boy, a Christian monk named Bahira recognized a distinguishing mark between Muhammad's shoulder blades, which was said to be the seal of prophethood, a divine mark distinguishing Muhammad. Martin Lings, *Muhammad: His Life Based on the Earliest Sources* (Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, 2006), 30. See also Sura 33:40. Martin says that Muhammad is unique in that he is the only prophet whose message is considered timeless. Martin, *Christianity*, 273.

²²Smith, *Islam in America*, 7. Schantz agrees, adding that they will acquire the title of deceiver and will be punished, although he does not specify the punishment. Schantz, *Islam in the Post 9/11 World*, 73.

²³Nabeel Jabbour, *The Crescent Through the Eyes of the Cross: Insights from an Arab Christian* (Colorado Springs, CO: Navpress, 2008), 186. Martin lists Jesus as one of the most important prophets in Islam. Martin, *Christianity*, 273.

²⁴Ayoub and Omar, 12. Also supported by Alavi, 37.

²⁵Ayoub and Omar, 158. See Sura 3:35-36. The sinless nature of Jesus and His mother are more clearly declared in a hadith. "Satan touches every son of Adam on the day when his mother gives birth to him with the exception of Mary and her son." *Sunnah.com*, "The Book of Virtues," 43, Hadith 193; <http://sunnah.com/muslim/43/193> (accessed October 29, 2015).

Each of the prophets of Allah was "entrusted [with] a Scripture, containing essentially the same message as the Koran."²⁶ The belief in each one of these Scriptures is considered the third *Article of Faith*.²⁷ This includes the Qur'an, the Torah, the Psalms, and the Gospel of Jesus.²⁸ Moses is seen as a Muslim prophet to the Jews, and Jesus is seen as a Muslim prophet to the Christians,²⁹ although they also view the biblical messages as largely having been distorted down through time.³⁰

Muhammad, as the most recent and last of the prophets, has brought the final, complete, and perfect message of Allah for humanity written together in the Qur'an.³¹ Both the Qur'an and the Sunna are seen as superior to the Bible,

²⁶Burke, 247. Alavi agrees with Burke, saying that through the prophets "God has proclaimed the same basic truth to all peoples of faith." Alavi, 11. Various authors use different spellings for the Qur'an. Some spell it "Koran."

²⁷Alavi, 36. See also Cornell, "Fruit of the Tree," 88. Smith, *Islam in America*, 7. Schantz, *Islam in the Post 9/11 World*, 71. Martin, *Christianity*, 272.

²⁸Haddad and Smith, *Mission to America*, 13. Cornell adds "the Pages of Abraham" to the list as well, but he is the only author consulted that does so. Cornell, "Fruit of the Tree," 88. Also see Burke, 247.

²⁹Ayoub and Omar, 218-219. Alavi mentions that because of their Scriptures, Jews and Christians are respectfully referred to as "People of the Book." Alavi, 36.

³⁰Smith, *Islam in America*, 7. Burke adds that because the previous revelations have been corrupted, the Qur'an is viewed as the only reliable and uncorrupted message of God available. Burke, 247.

³¹Haddad and Smith, *Mission to America*, 14. Alavi sees the Qur'an as the standard of truth by which all other writings are judged. Alavi, 36.

with the Qur'an's message seen as a universal message for all mankind,³² able to meet all the current and future needs of humanity.³³ The Qur'an is also considered the sole production of God with no human interference.³⁴

A belief in angels constitutes the second *Article of Faith* for Muslims.³⁵ It was the angel Gabriel who brought to Muhammad the message of the Qur'an.³⁶ Lumbard says that "Muslims maintain that revelation is cast directly into the heart of God's Prophets through the Angel Gabriel."³⁷ Thus, angels play a vital role in Islamic theology and the development of their sacred scriptures.

The fifth *Article of Faith*, then, is a belief in a last-day judgment.³⁸ This is the eschatological climax of Islamic theology, where the eternal destiny of every person

³²Ayoub and Omar, 21.

³³Haddad and Smith, *Mission to America*, 14.

³⁴Mustansir Mir, "The Qur'an, The Word of God," in *Voices of Islam*, Vol. 3, ed. Vincent J. Cornell (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2007), 50. Burke says it is considered a miracle by Muslims. Burke, 243. This is a claim that the Qur'an itself makes in Sura 2:23; 11:13; 17:88; 52:33-34.

³⁵Alavi, 35. Also see Cornell, "Fruit of the Tree," 88. Burke, 247. Martin, *Christianity*, 272. Schantz, *Islam in the Post 9/11 World*, 69-70.

³⁶Smith, *Islam in America*, 7. Burke agrees. Burke, 247. Alavi mentions that the angel Gabriel is the "Angel of Revelation in both the Christian and Muslim traditions." Alavi, 35. Schantz mentions Gabriel's exalted position as one of the four archangels. Schantz, *Islam in the Post 9/11 World*, 69.

³⁷Lumbard, 102.

³⁸Alavi, 38. Martin, *Christianity*, 248.

is decided.³⁹ There will be a general resurrection where the body and soul will reunite, and the book of deeds will be placed in the hands of each person who is raised. If their deeds were evil, the book will be placed in the left hand, signifying their destiny to burn in eternal hellfire. If their deeds were righteous, the book will be placed in the right hand, signifying their destiny to live eternally in paradise.⁴⁰ This judgment will be preceded by the coming of Jesus, who comes as the Messiah to kill the Antichrist, destroy all crosses and pigs, and bring unity to Christians and Muslims ushering in peace and pure truth.⁴¹

The sixth *Article of Faith* is Allah's sovereignty over all that happens on earth. It is the most controversial *Article of Faith*, since the doctrine of the judgment implies freewill, while this *Article of Faith* essentially implies that life is already predestined according to Allah's will.⁴² Even though a person's life may be

³⁹Alavi, 35. Schantz says that not only people, but animals and also *jinn* (demonic spirits that are inferior to angels) will be judged. Schantz, *Islam in the Post 9/11 World*, 73.

⁴⁰Smith, *Islam in America*, 8-9. Rather than judgment being based on a person's actions alone, Burke sees that the judgment is based on whether or not a person believed in the messages given to Muhammad. Burke, 248. Martin sides with Smith, seeing, the judgment as based on a person's deeds. Martin, *Christianity*, 273. Alavi concurs with both Smith and Martin, adding that it boils down to how a person used his or her time on earth. Alavi, 38.

⁴¹Ayoub and Omar, 95.

⁴²Burke, 248. Cornell says that Allah's immutable will is at the universal level, rather than at the level of particulars. The particulars of a person's life are given over to their personal freewill and choice. Cornell, "Fruit from the Tree," 71.

predestined by Allah, according to Mu'tazilite theology, each person bears the sole responsibility for his or her ultimate destiny.⁴³

Since who will be saved and who will be lost is known only by Allah, and since a person will be judged based on his or her deeds, it is impossible to have assurance of salvation in Islam.⁴⁴ Alavi explains it in this way: "Islam is a strict religion, in that it lacks the idea of vicarious atonement such as one finds in Christianity. In Islamic theology, believers are held completely responsible for their thoughts and actions."⁴⁵ This works-based theology is deeply incorporated into the entire religion of Islam

⁴³Feisal Abdul Rauf, "What Is Sunni Islam?" in *Voices of Islam*, Vol. 1, ed. Vincent J. Cornell (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2007), 198. Also see Martin, *Christianity*, 273. Alavi says that humanity has been given the capacity to exercise their will in either choosing good or evil, but that God has foreordained what events will transpire in a person's life. Ultimately, Alavi sees it as a combination of freewill and predestination. Alavi, 41. Burke, however, says that "nothing lies outside God's control, and that includes the free actions of men." Burke, 248. Burke also mentions that this interplay between human freewill and predestination is a mystery to Muslim scholars. Burke, 248.

⁴⁴Martin, *Christianity*, 273. Schantz says, on the other hand, that "the belief that everything that happens on earth is predestined assures the Muslim that his fate is in the hands of Allah, which gives him certainty, confidence and peace." Schantz, *Islam in the Post 9/11 World*, 74.

⁴⁵Alavi, 38. Ayoub and Omar connect the five Pillars of Islam with salvation by saying, "So expiation, or *takfir*, of sin must be done by the individual himself, and here, redemption is what men and women do with their own sin through repentance and through expiation, through prayers, fasts, sharing their wealth with the poor, and so on." Ayoub and Omar, 94.

and into the very identity of Muslim believers.⁴⁶ Cornell says, "The primacy of practice over faith . . . is so widely accepted in the Muslim world that some Western scholars have erroneously asserted that Islam has no orthodoxy."⁴⁷ This is why in Islam the *Pillars of Islam* are perhaps even more essential than the *Articles of Faith*.

The Five Pillars of Islam

The first *Pillar of Islam*, the *Shahada*, is the foundational practice which unites all of Islam. It is a personal testimony declaring a belief in the first two *Articles of Faith*. It is the verbatim recitation in Arabic "La ilaha illa' wa Muhammadun Rasul Allah," which means "There is no deity but God and Muhammad is the Messenger of God."⁴⁸ Not only is this a statement of belief in Allah, and Muhammad as his prophet, but when "pronouncing the *Shahada*, Muslims also imply their intention to perform the other four pillars of Islam and live their life as a Muslim, to the best of their ability."⁴⁹

⁴⁶Cornell, "Fruit of the Tree," 76. Mir comments that salvation in Islam is an achievement based on a successful life, as opposed to a gift given by God as found in Christianity. Mir, 52.

⁴⁷Cornell, "Fruit of the Tree," 89.

⁴⁸Alavi, 8. See also Burke, 249. Martin, *Christianity*, 274. Cornell, "Fruit of the Tree," 77. Schantz, *Islam in the Post 9/11 World*, 54-55.

⁴⁹Alavi, 9. In agreement with Alavi, Cornell mentions that the *Shahada* is an affirmation of both the faith and practice of Islam. Cornell, "Fruit of the Tree," 77.

The *Shahada* is the only requirement for admission into Islam.⁵⁰ When recited for this purpose, it must be done in the presence of at least two witnesses.⁵¹ After the recitation, the convert is then considered a part of the body of Muslim believers, called the *Ummah*.⁵² Smith emphasizes the vital position of the *Shahada* in the Muslim community by stating that "failure to believe in and articulate the oneness of God and the prophethood of Muhammad means that one is outside the community of Islam."⁵³

⁵⁰Martin, *Christianity*, 274. Alavi and Burke agree. Alavi, 9. Burke 249. Schantz says that, "The *Shahada* is the yardstick and measuring rod for Muslims." Schantz, *Islam in the Post 9/11 World*, 55.

⁵¹Cornell, "Fruit of the Tree," 77. Alavi mentions that many times there is a whole group of people, beyond the required two witnesses, to celebrate when one declares the *Shahada*. Alavi, 9.

⁵²Alavi, 9. This is more than simply a religious body; Donner says it is also a "politically unified community of Believers." Fred M. Donner, "Muhammad and the Caliphate: Political History of the Islamic Empire up to the Mongol Conquest," in *The Oxford History of Islam*. ed. John L. Esposito (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 18. Nasr says, "The concept of the *Ummah* calls Muslims not only to unite across national boundaries but to place Islam above all other political allegiances in their everyday lives." S. V. R. Nasr, "European Colonialism and the Emergence of Modern Muslim States," in *The Oxford History of Islam*, ed. John L. Esposito (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 555.

⁵³Smith, *Islam in America*, 9. Cornell agrees pointing out that many Muslim jurists will only accept one who practices the *Five Pillars* as genuinely Muslim, even if the *Articles of Faith* are accepted. He also adds that the *Shahada* "requires the believer to accept the prophet Muhammad as the messenger of Allah. In doing so, the prospective believer must also acknowledge the truth of the qur'anic revelation as well as the normative nature of the Sunna." Cornell, "Fruit of the Tree," 88-89.

The *Shahada* is so important to Islamic faith that it is a part of every aspect of the Muslim life. At birth the first words that a baby will hear is the *Shahada*,⁵⁴ and at death the final words spoken by the dying is the *Shahada*.⁵⁵ It is included in every Muslim ritual prayer⁵⁶ and is so intertwined with daily life that Martin mentions that "the average Muslim will repeat the *Shahada* twenty times a day, as it is foremost among religious duties."⁵⁷

The second *Pillar of Islam* is known as the *Salah*.⁵⁸ This pillar enjoins Muslims to pray five times a day facing Mecca.⁵⁹ As with the *Shahada*, Kabbani says that the *Salah*

⁵⁴Alavi, 8. See also Schantz, *Islam in the Post 9/11 World*, 55.

⁵⁵Virginia Gray Henry-Blakemore, "Even at Night the Sun Is There: Illness as a Blessing from God," in *Voices of Islam*, Vol. 3, ed. Vincent J. Cornell, (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2007), 124. Schantz says they are "the last words a dying Muslim should hear." Schantz, *Islam in the Post 9/11 World*, 55.

⁵⁶Shaykh Muhammad Hisham Kabbani, "The Importance and Meaning of Prayer in Islam," in *Voices of Islam*, Vol. 2, ed. Vincent J. Cornell (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2007), 41. See also Burke, 249.

⁵⁷Martin, *Christianity*, 274. Schantz also adds that it contains Islam's "most important creed," which is *Tawhid*. Schantz, *Islam in the Post 9/11 World*, 55.

⁵⁸Cornell, "Fruit of the Tree," 77. See also Burke, 249. Martin, *Christianity*, 274. Schantz, *Islam in the Post 9/11 World*, 55. Alavi, 11.

⁵⁹Alavi, 13. Alavi also mentions that Muslim prayers are not actually directed toward Mecca, but toward the Ka'bah. Alavi, 16. Muslims around the world must ascertain the direction of Mecca. In ancient times this was done through the science of astronomy, but many take advantage in modern times of a *qibla* compass specifically designed to point toward Mecca from anywhere in the world. Cornell, "Fruit of the Tree," 78. The direction can also be ascertained by a notch in the wall of every mosque. Burke, 249.

"contains the essential aspects of all five pillars of Islamic worship,"⁶⁰ which makes prayer a cornerstone of Islamic practice and a vital part of Islamic worship.

As central as *Salah* is to Islam, it is not viewed as a personal time of prayer. Instead, *Salah* is the repetition of ritualistic prayers engaged in as a community of believers.⁶¹ These ritualistic prayers are made punctually at the same time every day around the world: before sunrise, at midday, at mid-afternoon, at sunset, and at evening.⁶² They mainly consist of reciting specific passages from the Qur'an while physically bowing oneself in prostration before Allah.⁶³

⁶⁰Kabbani, 41. Whether or not it contains all five *Pillars* is probably debatable; however, the general thrust of Kabbani's statement concerning the importance of the *Salah* is supported by Cornell, who says that the *Salah* prayers are central to Islam and seen as a certain proof of Islam. Cornell, "Fruit of the Tree," 77.

⁶¹Martin, *Christianity*, 274. Schantz agrees, saying that "The prayers are completely ritualistic. All who take part whisper the same words and go through the same movements simultaneously." Schantz, *Islam in the Post 9/11 World*, 57.

⁶²Burke, 249. See also Alavi, 13. Schantz, *Islam in the Post 9/11 World*, 56. Cornell, "Fruit of the Tree," 77. Kamali says that "performing the dawn prayer even a minute after sunrise makes the prayer invalid." Mohammad Hashim Kamali, "The Shari'a: Law as the Way of God," in *Voices of Islam*, Vol. 3, ed. Vincent J. Cornell (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2007), 172. Schantz, in agreement with Kamali, says that "Theologians have with great exactness calculated the hours and minutes for the times of prayers in the entire world." Schantz, *Islam in the Post 9/11 World*, 56.

⁶³Alavi, 13. Mir says that these passages must be memorized and recited in Arabic in order to be considered valid for formal prayers. Mir, 50. Kamali adds that there is discipline and order in Muslim prayers, with everyone facing the same direction. Kamali, 172-173. Alavi mentions that only after the ritualistic prayers do some also add private prayers, known as *Du'a*. Alavi, 13. Burke mentions that *Du'a* is not like the *Salah* in that it does not contain specific formulas.

Believers are allowed to perform the prescribed prayers at home; however, a mosque is preferred.⁶⁴ On Friday all men must participate in noon prayers at a mosque.⁶⁵ Women are also encouraged to pray at the mosque, but must sit in a separate area apart from the men for the sake of modesty and to remove distraction.⁶⁶ Thus, the mosque serves as a community center of prayer.

Muslims view *Salah* as sacred and perform ritual cleansing before engaging in it, called *wudu*.⁶⁷ This ritual washing includes cleansing the ears, head, neck, and feet with water,⁶⁸ which is meant to remind the worshipper of the need for purity.⁶⁹ While believers are practicing *wudu*, it

Burke, 249. Schantz also says that private prayers only need to be whispered. Schantz, *Islam in the Post 9/11 World*, 58.

⁶⁴Kabbani, 35. Burke agrees that a mosque is not required, although it is preferred, saying that the place where prayer is made must be clean. Burke, 249.

⁶⁵Burke, 249. Alavi agrees with Burke and adds that women are given the option to pray at home if they choose. Alavi, 12.

⁶⁶Alavi, 13. Kamali, in agreement with Alavi, also says that nothing is to distract the worshippers during prayer, but this one activity is to absorb their entire attention. Kamali, 172.

⁶⁷Burke, 253. According to Schantz, everything must be clean before they pray, which includes the location of prayer. Schantz, *Islam in the Post 9/11 World*, 56.

⁶⁸Smith, *Islam in America*, 10. Kabbani mentions that if water is not available, "it is permitted to perform substitute ablution using dry earth." Kabbani, 17. Cornell agrees, adding that at times a bath is needed in place of the ritualistic cleaning. Cornell, "Fruit of the Tree," 78.

⁶⁹Alavi, 12. Schantz disagrees with Alavi, saying that the ritual cleansing before prayer is focused solely on the physical cleansing, not the need for an internal cleansing of the heart. Schantz, *Islam in the Post 9/11 World*, 56. Cornell seems to side with Alavi, seeing this

is a special time to reflect on the condition of the inner being, to repent of the clutter in one's life, to seek for forgiveness, and to focus on Allah with a pure heart.⁷⁰

The third *Pillar of Islam* is known as *Zakat*, which is a tax of at least two and a half percent of one's wealth.⁷¹ However, there are a variety of acceptable situations where the charity can be donated.⁷² Cornell mentions the following acceptable ways to give *Zakat*: "To feed the poor, to encourage conversion to Islam, to ransom captives, to relieve debtors of their burden, to help wayfarers, and to support those who devote themselves to the cause of God."⁷³ The main reason for giving *Zakat* is to recognize and show appreciation to God for His blessings.⁷⁴

ritual as symbolic. However, he only mentions that it is symbolic of purity, which leaves some ambiguity. Cornell, "Fruit of the Tree," 78.

⁷⁰Virginia Gray Henry-Blakemore, "Introduction: Daily Life in Islam," in *Voices of Islam*, Vol. 3, ed. Vincent J. Cornell (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2007), xvi-xix.

⁷¹Alavi, 17. See also Burke, 250. Cornell calls it a tithe. Cornell, "Fruit of the Tree," 83. Schantz says it is not really a tax, but instead refers to it as an alms, in agreement with Martin. Martin, *Christianity*, 274. Schantz, *Islam in the Post 9/11 World*, 58.

⁷²Alavi, 17.

⁷³Cornell, "Fruit of the Tree," 83. In America some Muslims use the *Zakat* to pay for the construction of mosques, although this is not orthodox. Smith, *Islam in America*, 13. In agreement, Schantz says that using *Zakat* to construct mosques is not a legitimate use. Schantz, *Islam in the Post 9/11 World*, 58.

⁷⁴Alavi, 17. This reason for giving the *Zakat* is seen through the illustration that Schantz gives, saying that a farmer in Uganda must pay 5% for *Zakat* as a thanks to Allah, who sends rain to water his fields. Schantz, *Islam in the Post 9/11 World*, 59. A secondary motivation for paying the *Zakat*, according to Martin, is that it has salvific merit, atoning for certain sins. Martin, *Christianity*, 274.

The fourth *Pillar of Islam* is a fast called *Sawm*.⁷⁵ This fast is not just from food and drink, but from sex, tobacco, untruthful words, and foul language.⁷⁶ Although the fast includes refraining from certain items and activities, it is not considered a time of sadness but of joy, anticipation, and excitement for many Muslims.⁷⁷ It is a time for Muslims to focus on acts of good will and proselytizing,⁷⁸ as well as a time to develop a sense of compassion and sympathy for those in poverty.⁷⁹

Sawm begins at the first sighting of the full moon at the beginning of the month of Ramadan and lasts the entire month.⁸⁰ Muslims will fast during daylight hours; however, at nightfall there is often feasting and social

⁷⁵Martin, *Christianity*, 274. See also Schantz, *Islam in the Post 9/11 World*, 59. Burke, 251. Cornell, "Fruit of the Tree," 83. Alavi, 20.

⁷⁶Smith, *Islam in America*, 14. Schantz adds that Muslims must abstain from any forms of pleasure during daylight hours. Schantz, *Islam in the Post 9/11 World*, 59.

⁷⁷Alavi, 21. Burke agrees with Alavi, mentioning it as a time of celebration with friends and family. Burke, 251.

⁷⁸Smith, *Islam in America*, 17.

⁷⁹Alavi, 21. Cornell and Schantz agree. Cornell, "Fruit of the Tree," 84. Schantz, *Islam in the Post 9/11 World*, 59.

⁸⁰Alavi, 21. This has created a real problem in the Muslim world where Muslims live at different latitudes. Schantz says that for those in the most northern latitudes, they celebrate the fast according to the time in Mecca. Schantz, *Islam in the Post 9/11 World*, 61.

gatherings.⁸¹ This is a time of increased prayer, increased pious acts, and increased readings of the Qur'an.⁸²

The fifth and final *Pillar of Islam* is the *Hajj*. It requires that if one is financially and physically able, he or she should endeavor to make a pilgrimage to Mecca.⁸³ Those who make the journey to Mecca in the *Hajj* are to accomplish certain tasks and visit certain sites as part of their spiritual journey. Probably the most well-known task is to circumambulate the Ka'bah counter-clockwise seven times.⁸⁴ Besides circumambulating the Ka'bah, Cornell says that pilgrims also should:

stand on Arafat, a plain southeast of Mecca . . . , spend the night at an encampment near Mecca called Muzdalifah, to throw stones at the three places where, according to Muslim tradition, Satan tried to tempt the Prophet Ismail . . . , to sacrifice an animal . . . , to drink water from the well called Zamzam . . . , [and finally] to perform two cycles of the canonical prayer at a place known as the Station of Abraham.

Following this list can take a pilgrim from a week to a month to complete.⁸⁵

⁸¹Burke, 251. Alavi says that Muslims "must finish their breakfast before the 'white thread of dawn' can be distinguished from 'its black thread' (Qur'an 2:187)." Alavi, 21.

⁸²Alavi, 22-24.

⁸³Cornell, "Fruit of the Tree," 84. See also Schantz, *Islam in the Post 9/11 World*, 61. Martin, *Christianity*, 274. Alavi, 25.

⁸⁴Cornell, "Fruit of the Tree," 85.

⁸⁵Martin, *Christianity*, 275.

Now that a basic foundation to understanding the beliefs and practices of mainstream Islam has been laid, it is important to discover how American Muslims are unique within this framework. Are American Muslims in alignment with mainstream Islam? Are there areas in which American Muslims differ from mainstream Islam? The next major section of this chapter will explore some of these questions in order to better understand the uniqueness of the American Muslim perspective.

Beliefs, Practices, and Identity of American Muslims

American Muslims reflect mainstream Islam in some ways and are unique in other ways. Research indicates that the majority of American Muslims agree on key doctrines, or the six *Articles of Faith*.⁸⁶ However, American Muslims are divided when it comes to issues of identity and faith practices.⁸⁷ At the heart of the divide is a clash between

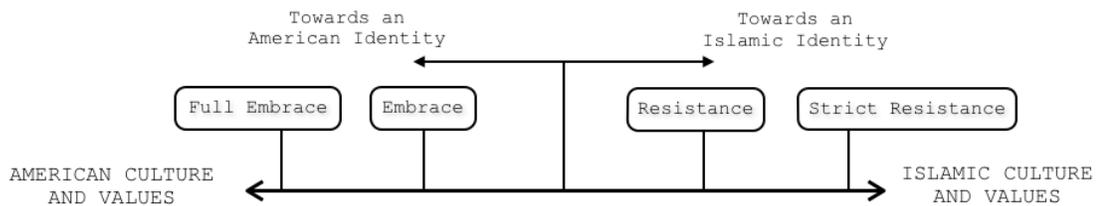
⁸⁶Pew Research Center, "Muslim Americans: Middle Class and Mostly Mainstream," www.pewresearch.org (Pew Research, 2007), 23; <http://www.pewforum.org/2007/05/22/muslim-americans-middle-class-and-mostly-mainstream2/> (accessed October 28, 2015). The article indicates that the highest agreements between middle-class and mostly mainstream Muslim Americans were on the doctrine of God (96%), the prophets (94%), and the future judgment (91%). There was somewhat less agreement on the existence of angels (87%) and the Qur'an (86%). The lowest agreement was on the literal inspiration of every word in the Qur'an (50%).

⁸⁷Fachrizal Halim, "Pluralism of American Muslims and the Challenge of Assimilation," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 26, no. 2 (August 2006): 235. Barazangi's research indicates that some of the Islamic practices are so affected by the environment of a secular society that a Muslim is left to choose between his job or compromising his religious practices. Nimat Hafez Barazangi, "Islamic Education in the United States and Canada: Conception and Practice of the Islamic Belief System," in *The Muslims of America*, ed. Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 168.

American and Islamic cultures,⁸⁸ which manifests itself in divergent views and practices within the American Muslim community.⁸⁹ Some approach this clash from the viewpoint that America should accommodate the Muslim lifestyle, others see total assimilation into the American culture as the best solution, while still others try to find some middle ground in an effort to integrate into society while preserving their Islamic identity.⁹⁰ A simple scale which summarizes this divide is presented below in Figure 2.1.

FIGURE 2.1

AMERICAN MUSLIM REACTION SCALE



Source: Summarized and adapted from Fachrizal Halim, "Pluralism of American Muslims and the Challenge of Assimilation."

⁸⁸Zeynep Isik-Ercan, "Being Muslim and American: Turkish American Children Negotiating Their Religious Identities in School Setting," in *Race Ethnicity and Education* 18, no. 2 (May 2014): 229.

⁸⁹Halim, 241.

⁹⁰Schantz, *Islam in the Post 9/11 World*, 115-116. According to Smith, these divergent views cause those who are resistant to American culture to criticize those who embrace it. Smith, *Islam in America*, 21. Findings from *Pew Research* agrees with Schantz's and Smith's viewpoints. *Pew Research*, 32. Haddad also sees a variety of responses to the struggle that American culture presents Muslim immigrants. Some abandon "some or all of their Islamic identity. Others insist on avoiding these obstacles by resorting to isolation." Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad, "Globalization of Islam," in *The Oxford History of Islam*, ed. John L. Esposito (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 614.

As can be seen at the top of the scale, identity is the prime issue in this struggle. Kaplan mentions it as the "mother of all issues."⁹¹ How identity is formed is based on many factors. For first-generation immigrants, identity is established and maintained through constant contact with Islamic communities within the United States who share their language, culture, and values. However, for second- and third-generation immigrants, the pressure to assimilate is greatly increased.⁹² Language is not a barrier, as in their parents' generation, and in general they have greater integration with mainstream American culture.⁹³ This situation is amplified especially through adolescence, when identity is being formed.⁹⁴ This tension, in many cases, begins to erode their faith.⁹⁵ This erosion of faith has

⁹¹Hasan Kaplan, "Muslim in America and the Question of Identity: Between Ethnic Heritage, Islamic Values, and the American Way," *Ekev Academic Review* 11, no. 32 (Summer 2007): 3.

⁹²Kaplan, 2. Barazangi's research agrees, showing that Islamic "youth identify primarily with North American values." Barazangi, 170.

⁹³Karen Leonard, "Introduction: Young American Muslim Identities," *The Muslim World* 95, no. 4 (October 2005): 475.

⁹⁴Isik-Ercan, 227. Isik-Ercan mentions peer pressure, rebellion against parental authority, and unstable emotions as issues that specifically affect identity development during this phase of life. However, identity formation is a complex issue that includes many factors such as race, color, nationality, and other factors. Ibid. Kaplan emphasizes the importance of identity formation during this age by stating that "adolescence is known as the most difficult and critical stage of human development," which includes one's culture, personal history, faith, and psychological perspective. Kaplan, 5.

⁹⁵Smith, *Islam in America*, 55. Kaplan explains that "this phase allows young people to re-evaluate their childhood beliefs, ideals, and value systems and recreate them based on their own experiences amplifying and encoding what is worthwhile to them." Kaplan, 7.

brought many Muslims to the point that "in terms of broad patterns of religiosity, American Islam resembles mainstream American religious life."⁹⁶

The religious trends of second- and third-generation American Muslims are following those of American Christians and Jews.⁹⁷ A surprising 75 percent are open to new or different ways of interpreting the teachings of Islam from how it has been traditionally interpreted.⁹⁸ Many are turning towards religious secularism, where they are detaching from institutional religion in favor of a more private spiritual identity.⁹⁹

⁹⁶*Pew Research*, 27. *Pew Research* also finds "that although many Muslims are relative newcomers to the U.S., they are highly assimilated into American society." *Ibid.*, 2. Halim agrees with this research, saying that the "paradigm of embrace is the dominant view of Muslims today." Halim, 240. Poston also sees increased exposure to the American culture as heavily shaping the identity of ethnic Muslims. Larry Poston, "The Current State of Islam in America," in *The Gospel for Islam*, eds. Roy Oksnevad and Dotsey Welliver (Wheaton, IL: Evangelism and Missions Information Service, 2001), 3-4.

⁹⁷John H. Morgan, "Islam and Assimilation in the West," *Journal of Religion & Society* 16 (2014): 5. *Pew Research* finds that one-fourth are very religious, with about half the population having a casual commitment, while a final quarter are not religiously engaged. *Pew Research*, 25.

⁹⁸*Pew Research*, 23.

⁹⁹Morgan, 5. Although many are turning towards religious secularism, *Pew Research* indicates that younger Muslims are more likely to identify strongly with Islam. *Pew Research*, 1. Schantz agrees, saying that there is an internal desire for a revival within Islam, which has led some in the younger generation to support the most radical forms of Islam. Schantz, *Islam in the Post 9/11 World*, 124. *Pew Research*, 6. However, those supporting radical Islam represent fewer than ten percent of the Muslims in Western countries, and thus radical Islam does not reflect the views of the majority of American Muslims. *Ibid.*, 130. This may simply be indicative of the division that exists even within second- and third-generation American Muslims.

Research in general tends to support the view that Muslims are becoming less active in institutional practices, with fewer than half of American Muslims actually attending the mosque on a weekly basis,¹⁰⁰ and only 61 percent who say they pray daily. Instead, American Muslims tend to turn towards more private acts of piety such as *Zakat*, which is practiced by 75 percent of American Muslims, as is fasting during the month of Ramadan.¹⁰¹ Many also continue to practice the health restrictions of their faith, such as not eating pork or drinking alcohol.¹⁰²

In conclusion, the surveys of American Muslims reveal that there is diversity within the American Muslim community. First-generation Muslims tend to reflect mainstream Islam, while second- and third-generation Muslims tend to be more open to a non-traditional Islamic identity. They also tend not to be as committed to some of the beliefs and practices of Islam. However, fasting, *Zakat*, and Islamic health laws seem to be uniformly practiced. Another major area that must be addressed in the

¹⁰⁰ *Pew Research*, 24. This trend follows Christian church attendance. "Church Attendance," *Wikipedia*, 2015; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Church_attendance#cite_note-RelTolRelRate-1 (accessed August 27, 2015). A similar trend is seen in Jewish synagogue attendance as well. Maayan Jaffe and Uriel Heilman, "Pew Survey of U.S. Jews," (October 3, 2013), *Baltimore Jewish Times*; <http://jewishtimes.com/12728/pew-survey-of-u-s-jews/> (accessed August 27, 2015).

¹⁰¹ *Pew Research*, 25.

¹⁰² Smith, *Islam in America*, 137-138.

American Muslim context are the negative views that Christians and Muslims hold of one another in the United States, which will be addressed in the next section.

Views of Christianity

One very important issue that must be understood and addressed in contextualization for Muslims is the view which Muslims have of Christianity. These views are shaped by an Islamic worldview, historical interactions between Christians and Muslims, and popular generalizations which link Catholicism and loose Western morals with Christianity.

The first area which shapes a Muslim's view of Christianity is his or her own worldview. During the time period of Muhammad, Muslims viewed the entire world through two simple definitions: *Dar al-Islam* and *Dar al-Harb*. *Dar al-Islam* represents the area of the world where Muslim law rules, while *Dar al-Harb* represents the areas where other religions or powers rule.¹⁰³ From the days of Muhammad, "The goal of Muslims [has been] to eventually make all of dar al-harb into dar al-Islam."¹⁰⁴ Naturally, a Christian country

¹⁰³Schantz, *Islam in the Post 9/11 World*, 105. Also see Poston, "The Current State of Islam," 7.

¹⁰⁴Poston, "The Current State of Islam," 7. Burke agrees with Poston, seeing the goal as being a one-world Islamic empire. Burke, 255. AbDat-Isa says that there are some efforts of evangelization by Muslims which are "intentional, thought-out actions and strategies that they have spent much time and effort developing and implementing" in order to bring North America under the Islamic religion. A. AbDat-Isa, "Islam's Agenda in North America: Patterns of Islamization," in *The*

such as the United States would be seen as an inferior target to ultimately bring under *Dar al-Islam*.

Not only does a Muslim worldview affect interactions with Christians, but history colors Muslim perceptions of Christianity as well. Although the Qur'an teaches that Christianity, Judaism, and Islam are all religions who teach truth from God, Christianity is viewed as Islam's main rival.¹⁰⁵ This rivalry reaches back to the Middle Ages, which was characterized by the dominance of the Roman Catholic Church over Western Europe. Under the guidance of Pope Urban II, Christians were called to begin a crusade to reclaim the holy territories of Israel which were being held under Muslim rule.¹⁰⁶ George describes this gruesome event by explaining that "Crusaders from the west, marching under the banner of the cross [in 1204] raped and pillaged

Gospel for Islam: Reaching Muslims in North America, eds. Roy Oksnevad and Dotsey Welliver (Wheaton, IL: Evangelism and Missions Information Service, 2001), 21.

¹⁰⁵Ayoub and Omar, 18. According to Lewis, Christianity as an alternative monotheistic religion has been Islam's main competition from early times. Bernard Lewis, "The Roots of Muslim Rage," *The Atlantic Monthly* 266, no. 3 (September 1990): 49.

¹⁰⁶Mahmut Aydin, "Religious Pluralism as an Opportunity for Living Together in Diversity," in *Muslim and Christian Reflections on Peace*, ed. J. Dudley Woodberry (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2005), 92. Smith sees the first Crusade in 1099 as the "beginning of many centuries of an active mutual hostility between east and west that was rarely known in earlier days." Jane I. Smith, "Islam and Christendom," in *The Oxford History of Islam*, ed. John L. Esposito (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 337. Prior to the Crusades, Christians had sought to confront Islam intellectually. Once this method proved unsuccessful, they turned towards more physical measures. AbDat-Isa, 37.

Constantinople."¹⁰⁷ Earlier, in A.D. 1099 "they slaughtered Muslims and Jews including women and children" as they took the city of Jerusalem.¹⁰⁸ Not all were in favor of this action by the church. Martin Luther, for example, opposed the Crusades. As an alternative, he suggested sending missionaries to the Muslims.¹⁰⁹ In addition to the Crusades, Muslims were driven out of Spain by the Jesuits, which left a painful portrait of Christianity in the minds of Muslims. Many Muslims viewed Christianity as a religion that was more concerned with destroying Islam than with winning converts or living in peace.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ Timothy George, *Is the Father of Jesus the God of Muhammad? Understanding the Differences Between Christianity and Islam* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 49. Smith agrees, seeing the Crusades as a massacre. Smith, "Islam and Christendom," 338. Although Christians waged war on Islam, it was Islam that first waged war on Christian lands. Aydin says that while Islam was spreading through the sword, it gave the conquered people three choices: "either they convert to Islam or pay the tax called *jizya* or are killed." Aydin, 93. Peters shares that "these events colored European thinking about Muslims and theirs about Christians." F. E. Peters, *The Monotheists: Jews, Christians, and Muslims in Conflict and Competition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), 5. AbDat-Isa says that even to this day, Muslims are affected by the Crusades in their relations with Christianity. AbDat-Isa, 37. George agrees with both Peters and AbDat-Isa. George, 48.

¹⁰⁸ George, 50. Aydin says that the Crusaders, motivated by a sense of religious obligation, "believed that the more Muslims they killed the more pious their reward would be." Aydin, 92.

¹⁰⁹ George, 52. Smith sees that the majority of Christian Europe was in favor of the Crusades, which was perhaps the result of widespread xenophobia. Smith, "Islam and Christendom," 337.

¹¹⁰ Haddad, "Globalization," 602-603. AbDat-Isa agrees with Haddad, seeing the Crusader attitude still present in modern Christian witnessing efforts. AbDat-Isa, 37.

The Crusades are not the only thing that has had a profound negative affect upon Muslim views of Christianity. As Western civilization grew and prospered, a certain envy of that success began to consume Islamic states. Lewis writes, "At first the Muslim response to western civilization was one of admiration and emulation."¹¹¹ As Islam attempted to imitate the success of the West, Western ideas began to change the fabric of Muslim society. American ideas and culture crept into the Islamic world through cinema and television.¹¹² Muslims eventually began to hate Westerners as they became more aware, as Lewis mentions, "of having been overtaken, overborne, and overwhelmed by those whom they regarded as their inferiors."¹¹³

In many ways Christians are perceived by Muslims through the lens of Hollywood. Television and movies have depicted an immoral, secular society with a mere surface value system and weak broken families.¹¹⁴ "Since the West has

¹¹¹Lewis, 56. Schantz says that the success of the West and the struggle of Islam has led to deep resentment and humiliation, which has given rise to acts of war against the West labeled as Jihad. Schantz, *Islam in the Post 9/11 World*, 102-103.

¹¹²Lewis, 50. Schantz also adds that through television and other Western media, the Muslim world has been able to see the relative poverty of Muslim lands compared with the "benefits they watch people in the West enjoying." Schantz, *Islam in the Post 9/11 World*, 102.

¹¹³Lewis, 59. Schantz agrees with Lewis, seeing the West's success as a hit to Islamic pride. Schantz, *Islam in the Post 9/11 World*, 102.

¹¹⁴Haddad, "Globalization," 611-612. Cornell points out that superficial materialism has affected not only Christianity, but Judaism and Islam as well. However, Cornell sees it as especially rampant in

been, as many Muslim thinkers claim, deprived of the spirit and values of Christianity, the Western civilization has nothing of value to offer to Muslims."¹¹⁵

Perhaps one of the most tragic events to affect the relations between Christians and Muslims was the devastating terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City. "Muslims and Christians are today more suspicious and hostile towards one another than ever before."¹¹⁶ American Christianity generally harbors a negative attitude towards Muslims, and Muslims have responded with a desire to defend their identity.¹¹⁷ One positive outcome is that this event has placed Muslim and Christian relations in the spotlight.¹¹⁸

Evangelical Protestantism from an Islamic perspective. Vincent J. Cornell, "Introduction: Voices of the Spirit," in *Voices of Islam*, Vol. 2, ed. Vincent J. Cornell, xvii-xxvii (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2007), xvii.

¹¹⁵Ayoub and Omar, 49. Poston agrees, adding that ignorance of the Bible, little participation in prayer, and high involvement in materialism has led to a generally low view of Christianity among Muslims. Poston, "The Current State of Islam," 17. Schantz also agrees, saying that it is Christian practice, not Christian beliefs, that repels Muslims. Schantz, *Islam in the Post 9/11 World*, 137.

¹¹⁶Schantz, *Islam in the Post 9/11 World*, 125-126. Halim points to negative portrayals of Islam and discrimination which have occurred since 9/11 and have increased hostility towards Muslims. Halim, 239. Cornell also agrees, saying that Muslims have been stereotyped by media as violent and oppressive. Vincent J. Cornell, "Voices of Islam," in *Voices of Islam*, Vol. 1, ed. Vincent J. Cornell, vi-xxiii (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2007), vii.

¹¹⁷Kaplan, 7. Fatima sees this negative attitude as shaping the identity of American Muslims. Saba Fatima, "Liberalism and the Muslim-American Predicament," *Social Theory and Practice* 40, no. 4 (October 2014): 597.

¹¹⁸Morgan, 8.

In conclusion, it can be seen by looking at the historical background of the Crusades, the infiltration of Westernism into Islamic lands, and the low view that Muslims have of Christians that there are some large barriers between Christianity and Islam. These traumatic past events have shaped the way that Muslims and Christians view one another and explain, at least in part, why Muslims are so resistant to Christianity. These negative views must be changed if Muslims will be reached with the gospel.

As this chapter concludes, it has provided a look at Islam, its history, and how American Muslims are unique within the framework of global Islam. In the next chapter, the unique beliefs of Adventists and American Muslims will be compared. Special focus will be placed on major areas of agreement, as well as major barriers present between the beliefs and practices of these two faiths.

CHAPTER 3

THEOLOGICAL COMPARISON BETWEEN SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS AND MUSLIMS

In order to define a Seventh-day Adventist contextualized approach to American Muslims, it is not only necessary to understand Islam as a world religion, but also how it relates to the unique doctrines of Seventh-day Adventism.¹ Once a comparison is made, areas of agreement, as well as areas of disagreement, become apparent. Understanding both the differences and the similarities will aid in defining appropriate forms of contextualization. It will also reveal crucial areas of disagreement between these groups.

The Godhead

Seventh-day Adventists are considered monotheists, believing that "there is one God."² Islam also shares in this heritage of monotheism, whose holy book says, "Know,

¹Seventh-day Adventists represent a diverse group of people; however, the views presented in this paper represent mainstream Adventism and traditional Adventist theology.

²[Gerard P. Damsteegt,] *Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . . : An Exposition of the Fundamental Beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church* (Silver Spring, MD: Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2005), 23. See also Fernando L. Canale, "Doctrine of God," in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, Vol. 12, ed. Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 121. Deut 4:35; 6:4; Isa 45:5; Zech 14:9.

therefore, that there is no god but God" (Surah 47:19).³ Both Adventism⁴ and Islam see God as set apart from every other object in the universe, whether animate or inanimate, as the sole entity worthy of worship.⁵

Along with the title of Creator, there are many other attributes of God which both Adventists and Muslims agree on. Both believe He is self-existent (John 5:26), He is independent (Eph 1:5; Qur'an 13:9), He is omniscient (Job 37:16; Ps 139:1-18, 147:5, 1 John 3:20; Qur'an 22:59), He is omnipresent (Ps 139:7-12, Heb 4:13; Qur'an 2:115), He is omnipotent (Dan 4:17, 25, 35; Matt 19:26; Rev 19:6; Qur'an 59:23), He is eternal (Ps 90:2; Rev 1:8; Qur'an 3:2), and He is unchangeable (Mal 3:6, Ps 33:11, Jas 1:17; Qur'an 6:34; 10:64).⁶ All of these attributes distinguish and elevate God to a platform which no other part of Creation shares.

³Muhammed A. Asadi, *Islam and Christianity: Conflict or Conciliation?* (Lincoln, NE: Writers Club Press, 2001), 31. Alavi agrees, stating that this belief is known as *tahwid*. Alavi, 9. See also Sura 2:163; 6:19; 9:31; 16:51; 20:98; 29:46; 37:4; 38:65.

⁴"Adventism" is a shortened form of "Seventh-day Adventist." Another shortened form of the same name in this paper is "Adventist."

⁵Susan L. Douglass, "The Fabric of Muslim Daily Life," in *Voices of Islam*, Vol. 3, ed. Vincent J. Cornell (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2007), 5. Damsteegt says, "Our worship of God is based on the fact that He is our Creator and we are His creatures." Damsteegt, 84. See also Sura 72:18; 7:73. Exod 20:3; Deut 5:7; 6:13-14; Jer 25:6; Matt 4:10.

⁶Damsteegt, 27. Shaykh Tusi, *Tenets of Islam* (Karachi, Pakistan: Islamic Seminary Publications, 1987), 5; <https://goaloflife.files.wordpress.com/2011/08/sheikh-al-tusi-tenets-of-islam.pdf> (accessed November 25, 2015).

Although there are areas of agreement shared between Adventists and Muslims on the doctrine of God, there are also vast areas of disagreement concerning this doctrine. This disagreement is over the Trinity, which includes the divinity of Jesus and the personhood of the Holy Spirit.⁷ Seventh-day Adventists believe that "there is one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a unity of three co-eternal Persons."⁸ This does not mean that Seventh-day Adventists believe in worshipping multiple gods, such as one might find in Hinduism. Instead, they believe that "while the Godhead is not one in person, God is one in purpose, mind, and character."⁹

Samaan explains the reason why this belief has caused such disunity and disagreement by pointing out that "the

⁷Ayoub and Omar, 117. The Qur'an denies the doctrine of the Trinity. Sura 5:73. It also denies that Jesus is God. Sura 9:31. Accad says the Trinity is viewed as a Christian blasphemy by Muslims. Fouad Elias Accad, *Building Bridges: Christianity and Islam* (Colorado Springs, CO: Navpress, 1997), 56.

⁸Damsteegt, 23. Canale, "Doctrine of God," 149. Pfandl shares that many early Adventist founders, such as James White, Joseph Bates, J. N. Loughborough, R. F. Contrell, J. N. Andrews, and Uriah Smith, were all strongly anti-trinitarian. Gerhard Pfandl, "The Doctrine of the Trinity Among Seventh-day Adventists," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 17, no. 1 (Spring 2006): 161. Over time the positions of many changed, and the anti-trinitarian atmosphere evaporated. Pfandl, 166.

⁹Damsteegt, 30. Canale agrees, saying that Jesus' divinity "does not encompass the whole divine being." Canale, "Doctrine of God," 125. White compares the oneness of Christ and God as the same oneness that existed between Christ and His disciples, a oneness that does not destroy the unique personhood of either. Ellen G. White, *Counsels for the Church* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 1991), 76-77. This is in harmony with Jesus' prayer that the disciples should experience the oneness that exists between the Father and the Son. John 17:20-23.

greatest sin in Islam is the *Shirk*, which in Arabic means 'association' referring to the idolatry of admitting that anyone can share in God's divinity."¹⁰ Obviously, if this is the greatest sin, then the doctrine of the Trinity presents the most challenging barrier. However, much of the disunity that exists over this doctrine comes from false assumptions and erroneous views by Muslims of Christian beliefs which were formed early in Islamic history.¹¹

In summary, the importance and centrality of the oneness of God in Islam makes this belief a key obstacle that must be overcome in Muslim evangelism. Since the Trinity is a doctrine of the Bible, establishing the trustworthiness of the Bible will be an essential first step prior to teaching the doctrine of the Trinity. The next section will compare Adventist and Muslim views of the Bible and inspiration.

¹⁰Philip G. Samaan, *Blood Brothers* (Collegedale, TN: College Press, 2001), 56. Alavi adds that this is the unforgivable sin in Islam. Alavi, 9. This is also expressly mentioned in the Qur'an. Sura 4:48.

¹¹Accad, 56. The Qur'an mistakenly views the Christian Trinity as God, Jesus, and Mary. Sura 5:116. Pfandl says that the Trinity doctrine in Christianity is not based on paganism, which in the Hindu, Egyptian, and Babylonian religions was all based on the family triad of father, mother, and son. Pfandl, 177. Therefore, Hoover concludes that the Islamic understanding of a trinitarian view may be traced to heretical Christian groups in early Arabia and necessitates the need for Muslims "to examine what Christians themselves say about the Trinity before rejecting it." Jon Hoover, "Islamic Monotheism and the Trinity," *The Conrad Grebel Review* 27, no. 1 (Winter 2009): 58.

The Bible and Inspiration

The Bible is another belief that is both a bridge and a major barrier between Muslims and Adventists. The controversy over the Bible mainly revolves around the authenticity of the New Testament.¹² Muslims see the Qur'an as a book which has shaped and influenced humanity; however, the Bible is seen as a document largely shaped and influenced by the church.¹³ Consequently, many Muslims today feel that the corrupted texts of the Bible are unreliable.¹⁴

Despite the disagreement over the authenticity of the New Testament, the Qur'an actually treats the Torah, the Psalms, and the Gospels as authentic messages from God to Jewish and Christian peoples.¹⁵ Many of the same stories and

¹²Ayoub and Omar, 69. Accad says that Muslims view the entire Bible as corrupted. Accad, 142. Mutei says that although some verses in the Qur'an are supportive of the Bible, the Muslim community began to view the Bible as unreliable due to perceived corruption. Joseph M. Mutei, "The Bible: Classical and Contemporary Muslim Attitudes and Exegesis," *Evangelical Review of Theology* 31, no. 3 (July 2007): 209.

¹³Ayoub and Omar, 11. Mutei points to the contradictions between the Gospel accounts as evidence that the New Testament was changed by the Church. Mutei, 211. Klingbeil disagrees with Ayoub's and Omar's assessment, saying that the books of the Bible were self-authenticating to the Christian community at large, "and, as a result, were included in the canon." Gerald A. Klingbeil, "The Text and the Canon of Scripture," in *Understanding Scripture: An Adventist Approach*, ed. George W. Reid (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2006), 91.

¹⁴Accad, 142. Accad says that in order for the Bible to be intentionally corrupted, it would have required universal agreement from Jews and Christians around the world, an unverifiable and highly unlikely scenario. *Ibid.*, 150. Damsteegt also points out, "fulfilled prophecies verify the Scripture's reliability." Damsteegt, 18.

¹⁵Smith, "Islam and Christendom," 306. Mutei, 209. See also Sura 3:113; 5:43; 10:95.

prophets found in the Bible are mentioned in the Qur'an as well.¹⁶ According to Accad, this is because "what Muhammad quoted in the Qur'an comes from what he heard from the Jews and Christians he met in Arabia."¹⁷ Of course, Accad's viewpoint does not reflect how Muslims see the revelation of the Qur'an.¹⁸

The belief in verbal inspiration will be another obstacle which Adventists will need to overcome. Islam claims that the Qur'an is verbally inspired,¹⁹ while Adventists reject verbal inspiration.²⁰ The Adventist viewpoint is better explained by the Adventist Church co-founder Ellen G. White, when she says that "the writers of

¹⁶Lumbard, 113.

¹⁷Accad, 10. Mutei says that early Islam saw itself in such harmony with the Bible "that the Qur'an asked Muslims to seek clarification and guidance from [Christians]." Mutei, 208-209.

¹⁸Mutei, 212.

¹⁹Mir, 47. Donner says it is literally "God's own eternal speech." Donner, 7.

²⁰Hugh Dunton, "Ellen G. White and Muhammad: A Study in the Prophetic Call," in *The Three Angels and the Crescent: A Reader*, eds. Jonquil Hole and Borge Schantz (Newbold College, Backnell, Berkshire, England: SDA Global Centre for Islamic Studies, 1993), 121. Lemke says that Adventists view the Bible as inspired on the level of thoughts. Steve W. Lemke, "The Inspiration and Authority of Scripture," in *Biblical Hermeneutics: A Comprehensive Introduction to Interpreting Scripture*, eds. Bruce Corley, Steve W. Lemke, and Grant I. Lovejoy (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2002), 177-181. Canale agrees, adding that Adventists have also transitioned between different views of inspiration. Fernando Canale, "Revelation and Inspiration," in *Understanding Scripture: An Adventist Approach*, ed. George W. Reid (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing, 2006), 52-59.

the Bible were God's penmen, not His pen."²¹ Rather than affecting the individual words of the biblical writers, God incarnated His thoughts through the weakness of human language.²² This was accomplished through the working of the Holy Spirit, "and since God the Holy Spirit inspired the writers, God then is its author."²³

In summary, Adventists have an advantage in that the Qur'an mentions the Bible as an originally authentic revelation from God. Archaeology and prophecy will need to be added to support the fact that the Bible is still an accurate revelation of God. The non-verbal inspiration of the Bible will eventually need to be covered, as it also presents a possible obstacle for Muslims. Once the trustworthiness of the Bible is established, it opens the doors for a discussion of other major doctrines, such as the doctrine of salvation.

²¹Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1958), 1:21. Van Bemmelen says, in agreement with White, that "the prophets did not write their books as if they were mere copyists." Peter M. Van Bemmelen, "Revelation and Inspiration," in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, Vol. 12, ed. Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 38.

²²Damsteegt, 15. Although Canale does not claim that God dictated Scripture as in verbal inspiration, he sees God as ensuring that the literal words used by the authors would accurately convey His thoughts. Canale, "Revelation and Inspiration," 58-59.

²³Damsteegt, 13-14. According to Canale, the Holy Spirit oversaw the production of Scripture, ensuring that what was written was consistent with God's own thoughts. Canale, "Revelation and Inspiration," 56. See also 2 Pet 1:21; 2 Tim 3:16.

The Nature of Man and Salvation

Another major doctrinal barrier between Adventists and Muslims is the doctrine of salvation. According to Adventists, human nature is inherently sinful from birth.²⁴ This corrupt nature is such that, without God's intervention, all of humanity is hopelessly lost in slavery to sin,²⁵ and all are doomed to an eternal death.²⁶ However, Adventists also believe that God foresaw man's dilemma and created a plan whereby man might be saved from his sins.²⁷

²⁴Damsteegt, 104. See also Ps 51:5; Rom 5:12; Jer 17:9; Eph 2:3; Ps 58:3. Gulley agrees, saying, "irrespective of one's parents, all babies are born with a tendency to sin." Norman A. Gulley, "The Effects of Adam's Sin on the Human Race," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 5, no. 1 (Spring 1994): 203. Blazen, in agreement, says that sin is also the rebellious leanings of the heart. Ivan T. Blazen, "Salvation," in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, Vol. 12, ed. Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 275. See also 1 John 3:4; Isa 53:6.

²⁵Damsteegt, 104. White says, "The sin of our first parents brought guilt and sorrow upon the world, and had it not been for the goodness and mercy of God, would have plunged the race into hopeless despair." Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1890), 61. Gulley clarifies that because sin includes a person's thoughts and motivations, slavery to sin is an internal issue rather than merely an external one. Gulley, 201. See also John 8:34; Rom 7:18-23.

²⁶Damsteegt, 102. See also Rom 6:23; Mal 4:1; Matt 10:28. Gulley makes an important distinction, seeing the first death as a consequence of Adam's sin; however, the second death, which is eternal, is a penalty for each person's personal sins. Gulley, 200. See also Ezek 18:20.

²⁷Damsteegt, 107. Holmes says that the plan of salvation encompasses not only justification, but also sanctification, where transformation takes place within the life of the believer. C. Raymond Holmes, "What is the Gospel?" *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 3, no. 2 (Fall 1992): 143. See also 1 Cor 6:11; 2 Thess 2:13.

This plan of salvation was initiated by God and was motivated by absolute love.²⁸ Through the incarnation, God sent His own Son, Jesus Christ, to become the second Adam for humanity.²⁹ Damsteegt says, "He would make the atonement for their sin; He would meet the demands of God's violated law. No human being or angel could assume that responsibility."³⁰ Thus, God was able to offer humanity what they needed most, namely, a perfect life and a perfect sacrifice through Jesus Christ.³¹

Islam is completely opposed to this viewpoint of the nature of humanity and salvation. Instead of seeing humans as inherently sinful or wicked, Islam teaches that humans are inherently good.³² The problem with humanity is the

²⁸Damsteegt, 122. Gerhard F. Hasel, "Salvation in Scripture," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 3, no. 2 (Fall 1992): 36. See also John 3:16; Jer 31:3; Jonah 2:9; Ps 35:3.

²⁹Damsteegt, 106. Cairus points out that Christ is the second Adam, in that, just as the first Adam negatively affected the entire human race, Christ provides "atonement for the whole race as the second Adam." Aecio E. Cairus, "The Doctrine of Man," in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, Vol. 12, ed. Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 218.

³⁰Damsteegt, 108. Hasel, in agreement, simply says, "He is our substitute." Hasel, "Salvation," 19. See also Acts 4:12; John 14:6; Isa 43:11.

³¹Damsteegt, 129. See also Rom 3:21. Peter M. Van Bemmelen, "Justification by Faith: An Adventist Understanding," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 20, no. 1-2 (Fall 2009): 181.

³²Gordon Nickel, "Islam and Salvation: Some On-Site Observations," *Direction* 23, no. 1 (Spring 1994): 9. Accad agrees, saying that many Muslims believe that they are by nature good; however, there are some that are "already convinced of the wages of sin." Accad, 85. Schantz also agrees, saying that Adam's fall made no impact on the nature of humanity. Schantz, *Islam in the Post 9/11 World*, 152. See also Sura 20:122-123.

weakness and forgetfulness of God's will.³³ Islam teaches that humans are not slaves to sin, but are able to obey Allah through their own strength.³⁴ Humanity only needs the right instruction in order to correct their own deficiencies, which Islam as a religion provides.³⁵ Thus, Islam is heavily a works-based religion.³⁶

Islam is concerned with the external rather than the internal.³⁷ Despite this focus on salvation by works, there is no assurance of salvation given in either the Qur'an or the Hadith.³⁸ Many Muslims would say that salvation is

³³C. W. Mitchell, "Islamic Beliefs and Agriculture," in *The Three Angels and the Crescent*, eds. Jonquil Hole and Borge Schantz (Bracknell, Berkshire, England: SDA Global Centre for Islamic Studies, 1993), 87. See also Schantz, *Islam in the Post 9/11 World*, 152. Accad actually sees the Qur'an as showing that men are sinful, not just forgetful. Accad, 88. See Sura 14:34; 33:72; 20:121; 3:11. Gulley says that in Adventism, sin is not simply a matter of forgetfulness, but an intentional rebellion. Gulley, 203.

³⁴Nickel, 9. See also Christine Schirmacher, "They Are Not All Martyrs: Islam on the Topics of Dying, Death, and Salvation in the Afterlife," *Evangelical Review of Theology* 36, no. 3 (July 2012): 251. Sura 8:20; 24:54; 3:132; 4:79; 59:7; 4:68; 4:63.

³⁵Schirmacher, 250. Mir says that humanity's situation is improved through the instruction of the Qur'an. Mir, 53. Nasr adds that Islam simply helps people rediscover the good within themselves. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "Evil as the Absence of Good," in *Voices of Islam*, Vol. 2, ed. Vincent J. Cornell (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2007), 136. See also Schantz, *Islam in the Post 9/11 World*, 153.

³⁶AbDat-Isa, 25. See also Nickel, 5. Schantz, *Islam in the Post 9/11 World*, 151. Sura 4:13-14.

³⁷Poston, "The Current State of Islam," 14. See also Cornell, "Fruit of the Tree," 89.

³⁸Schirmacher, 251. Poston says, "The Qur'an speaks of no new birth, no inner awareness of God's presence, no spiritual indwelling or empowerment for holy living, and no sense of assurance of eternal life

completely up to Allah's arbitrary will.³⁹ Others believe that confession of the *Shahada* is enough to be saved.⁴⁰ For others, the search for assurance of salvation has led them to join radical *jihadi* groups.⁴¹ For Adventists, "the assurance of salvation now and in the judgment"⁴² is an attractive belief that may be a bridge for Islam.

In summary, Islam's focus on salvation by works is destined to leave a sense of hopelessness, since there is a lack of any assurance of salvation in Islam.⁴³ This presents a large opportunity for the gospel to be shared as the hope for all humanity. Muslims must first grasp fully their own helpless state. This helpless condition is self-evident

in the presence of God." Poston, "The Current State of Islam," 14. See also Schantz, *Islam in the Post 9/11 World*, 156. Martin, *Christianity*, 273.

³⁹Nickel, 7. See also Burke, 248. Schantz, *Islam in the Post 9/11 World*, 157. Martin, *Christianity*, 273.

⁴⁰Nickel, 6. Schirmacher agrees, if the *Shahada* are the last words spoken before death. Schirmacher, 256. Schantz says, "human actions help to get salvation." Schantz, *Islam in the Post 9/11 World*, 156.

⁴¹Schirmacher, 265. The majority of Muslim scholars agree that suicide bombers will immediately be taken to heaven. Schirmacher, 254. Gabriel agrees, saying, "those who die in jihad do not go through the process of resurrection and judgement. They are granted instant salvation." Theodore Gabriel, "Conflict and Martyrdom in Islam," *Theology* 107, no. 839 (September 2004): 331. See also Sura 9:111; 3:169.

⁴²Damsteegt, 133. See also Blazen, 289. Ed Christian, "Blessed Assurance? Yes!: A Doctrine of the Assurance of Salvation," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 10, no. 1-2 (1999): 241.

⁴³Without the assurance of salvation, the Bible indicates that a human being has no hope. See Eph 2:11-13.

when one considers his or her own struggle to reach the high standard which God sets. Without God's intervention, our struggle is in vain. Once this is understood, the gospel becomes a hope-filled message that will be attractive to Muslims. The identity of Jesus and the historical narrative of the cross, however, present a major barrier to receiving the full gospel and will need to be addressed.

The Son of God

Perhaps the most controversial of the prophets between Adventism and Islam is Jesus Christ. He is the pillar of every Adventist doctrine⁴⁴ and the One to whom the entire Bible points.⁴⁵ In Islam, Jesus is considered a prophet in a long line of prophets,⁴⁶ but Muslims are adamant that He is not the Son of God.⁴⁷ Adventists, on the other hand, see

⁴⁴Damsteegt, 119. Dederen says that "Seventh-day Adventists advocate a Christ-centered theological system." Raoul Dederen, "Christ: His Person and Work," in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, Vol. 12, ed. Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 198.

⁴⁵Damsteegt, 118. General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Executive Committee, "Methods of Bible Study" (October 12, 1986); <https://www.adventist.org/en/information/official-statements/documents/article/go/0/methods-of-bible-study/> (accessed November 30, 2015).

⁴⁶Lumbard, 116. Lumbard also says that He is considered one of the highest prophets in Islam. Lumbard, 117. Samaan agrees with Lumbard. Samaan, *Blood Brothers*, 45. Larson says that although Christians can agree that Jesus was a prophet, they believe that He claimed to be more than a prophet. Warren Larson, "Jesus in Islam and Christianity: Discussing the Similarities and Differences," *Missiology: An International Review* 36, no. 3 (July 2008): 329.

⁴⁷Lumbard, 116. Larson, 331. See also Sura 4:171-172; 5:19, 75-78, 119-120; 9:30-31; 19:35.

Jesus as fully God's Son, coexistent with God throughout eternity.⁴⁸

Adventists also believe that Jesus' death and resurrection are real historical events which are central to the Adventist concept of salvation.⁴⁹ Islam takes the completely opposite view, saying that Jesus was never crucified, but was instead taken to heaven in order to be saved from the humiliation of the cross.⁵⁰ Islam also rejects the cross because their theology does not depend on it, but for Christians it is the very center of their theology.⁵¹

In summary, Jesus' identity and the narrative of His death and resurrection are key barriers that must be overcome in order to accept His full gift of salvation. One major advantage that Adventists have when working with Muslims is that Jesus is viewed as a prophet. If the Bible is reliable and Jesus is a true prophet with an authentic message from God, then perhaps the testimony of both the

⁴⁸Damsteegt, 50. Dederen, 162. See also John 8:58; Mic 5:2; Isa 9:6; John 1:1.

⁴⁹Damsteegt, 121. Hasel, "Salvation," 19. See also 1 Cor 15:13-17; 1 Pet 3:18.

⁵⁰Lumbard, 118. Larson sees this as the most popular option in Islam, but also adds that not only are there other theories such as the swoon theory which Muslims ascribe to, but that there is no consensus in Islam on exactly what happened at the cross. Larson, 333. Accad sees the Muslim view as a misinterpretation of the Qur'an, which he says supports the actual death and resurrection of Jesus. Accad, 138.

⁵¹Larson, 332.

Bible and Jesus' own testimony can provide a bridge for Muslims in accepting Jesus' identity and history. The next section will compare how Adventists and Muslims view the other prophets.

The Gift of Prophecy

The view of prophets, past and present, is another major area of both agreement and disagreement. For Adventists the gift of prophecy "is an identifying mark of the remnant church and was manifested in the ministry of Ellen G. White."⁵² Likewise, for Islam the long line of biblical and non-biblical prophets which began with Adam and ended with Muhammad testifies to the validity of Islam as the true religion.⁵³ Adventists and Muslims believe that the message of a true prophet, if followed, will protect them against heretical doctrines.⁵⁴ Although both religions place a special emphasis on the gift of prophecy, Adventists view the gift of prophecy as covering not only

⁵²Damsteegt, 247. See also Denton Edward Rebok, *Believe His Prophets* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing, 1958), 78. George E. Rice, "Spiritual Gifts," in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, Vol. 12, ed. Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 632.

⁵³Lumbard, 103. Mir points out that Islam does not consider itself a new religion, but rather the next group to whom a prophet was sent to continue the true religion of Allah. Mir, 53.

⁵⁴Dunton, 129. Rice, 629. See also Sura 33:57; 16:24-25; 9:61.

the entire biblical timeline, but also extending past the time period of Muhammad to the Second Coming of Jesus.⁵⁵

Since Adventists also believe that there are false prophets,⁵⁶ they follow certain biblical tests to distinguish genuine prophets from false.⁵⁷ This test first says that a genuine prophet's message must not contradict the Bible; secondly, their predictions must be fulfilled; thirdly, they must confess the incarnation and atoning sacrifice of Christ; and, lastly, they must display a godly lifestyle.⁵⁸ Adventists believe that Ellen White meets the criteria of a genuine prophet.⁵⁹ However, Ellen White would not meet the criteria of a genuine prophet in Islam, since Islam views Muhammad as the final prophet and, naturally, all subsequent prophets as false.⁶⁰ Likewise, Adventists cannot accept Muhammad as a genuine prophet, since his

⁵⁵Rice, 623. Damsteegt, 250. See also Joel 2:28-29; 1 Cor 1:6-8; Rev 19:10.

⁵⁶Damsteegt, 251. Van Bemmelen, "Revelation and Inspiration," 42. Rice, 629. See also Matt 24:24; 1 John 4:1.

⁵⁷Damsteegt, 254. Rice mentions four different criteria, all of which must be met, to validate a legitimate prophet. Rice, 629. See also 1 Thess 5:20.

⁵⁸Damsteegt, 254. Rice, 629-630. Herbert E. Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord: The Prophetic Ministry of Ellen G. White* (Silver Spring, MD: Pacific Press Publishing, 1998), 29-32. See also Matt 7:15; Deut 13:1-5; Isa 8:20; Deut 18:21,22; Jer 28:9.

⁵⁹Damsteegt, 255. Rice, 635.

⁶⁰Lumbard, 102. Dunton agrees with Lumbard. Dunton, 73.

revelations contradict the Bible and he did not confess the incarnation or atoning sacrifice of Christ.⁶¹

In summary, there is a high level of agreement between Adventists and Muslims on the biblical prophets; however, the major disagreement comes with the status of Muhammad and Ellen White. These two figures are so central to the beliefs of both Adventists and Muslims, and the disagreement so intense, that it should probably be one of the last areas addressed by Adventists in evangelizing Muslims. The next section compares the eschatology of both Adventists and Muslims.

The Second Coming and the End of Time

According to Adventists, Christ's glorious Second Coming is not only the central theme of biblical prophecy, but is the climactic culmination of prophecy.⁶² This intense focus on the Second Coming finds a parallel in Islam, where the central eschatological event is also the Second Coming at the end of time.⁶³ This parallel supports the assumption

⁶¹For a comparison in the contradictions of the Qur'an and the Bible, see Sura 2:229 and Mar 10:8-9. See also Sura 66:12; 19-28-29; and Num 26:58-59. See also Sura 5:76-79; 4:169-170 and John 3:16. Asadi also sees this wide divergence between the revelations of Muhammad and the Bible, especially as they relate to the incarnation. Asadi, 31. Dunton sees Ellen White and Muhammad as irreconcilably opposed to one another. Dunton, 119.

⁶²Damsteegt, 373. Richard P. Lehmann. "The Second Coming of Jesus," in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, Vol. 12, ed. Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 898.

⁶³Larson, 334. Haddad sees the Second Coming of Jesus as part of the climax, but also includes the coming of the Mahdi (a righteous leader who unites Islam) and the Antichrist as key players in the

that Islamic eschatology was influenced by that of Jews and Christians.⁶⁴

Another parallel are the signs in nature which foretell the Second Coming. Adventists have long seen that catastrophic natural disasters foretell the approach of the end.⁶⁵ Islam also sees catastrophic natural disasters as signs which indicate that the end is near.⁶⁶ Although there is general agreement regarding the signs in the natural world, there is a major disagreement in what will actually occur at the end when Jesus Christ comes.

For Adventists, Jesus Christ comes for the express purpose of delivering His people from sin, suffering, Satan, and death. In addition, Jesus will take His people to heaven to be citizens of His eternal kingdom.⁶⁷ However, for Muslims the Second Coming takes place primarily to elevate Islam as a world power and to totally annihilate all of their enemies.⁶⁸ All pigs and crosses will be

climax of Islamic eschatology. Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad and Jane I. Smith, "The Anti-Christ and the End of Time in Christian and Muslim Eschatological Literature," *The Muslim World* 100, no. 4 (October 2010): 515.

⁶⁴Larry Poston, "The Second Coming of 'Isa': An Exploration of the Islamic Premillennialism," *The Muslim World* 100, no. 1 (January 2010): 107.

⁶⁵Damsteegt, 378. Lehmann, 903. See also Luke 21:25; Mark 13:24-25; Rev 6:12-13; Matt 24:7.

⁶⁶Haddad and Smith, "The Anti-Christ," 505. See also Sura 81:1-6.

⁶⁷Damsteegt, 372-277. Lehmann, 908-909.

⁶⁸Poston, "The Second Coming," 108. Larson, 335. Haddad sees this as the war of Armageddon. Haddad and Smith, "The Anti-Christ," 527.

destroyed with the Antichrist, and then the entire world will experience peace under Islamic Sharia law.⁶⁹

Both Adventists and Muslims believe that the Second Coming will be a surprise to the world.⁷⁰ Adventists believe that the Second Coming will be a visible and audible event⁷¹ which occurs in the sky, not on earth.⁷² Muslims, on the other hand, believe that Jesus will appear at some spot on earth, like Jerusalem or Damascus,⁷³ where He will set up an earthly kingdom and rule for forty years.⁷⁴ Instead of an

Adventists also believe that Christ will destroy all false religions and world empires; however, they do not believe it is to establish a human kingdom, but rather to establish God's kingdom. Damsteegt, 376, 378.

⁶⁹Haddad and Smith, "The Anti-Christ," 515. Larson agrees. Larson, 335. Poston says that Islam holds similar views to dispensational pre-millennialism, believing that there will be a seven-year war, followed by a literal one thousand years of earthly peace. Poston, "The Second Coming," 109-110. Johnsson differentiates Adventists' viewpoints, categorizing them as historic pre-millennialists who do not agree with dispensationalism. William G. Johnsson, "Biblical Apocalyptic," in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, Vol. 12, ed. Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 811.

⁷⁰Damsteegt, 372. Haddad and Smith, "The Anti-Christ," 515. Lehmann, 903. Matt 24:42-44; Luke 12:40; 1 Thess 5:2-4; 2 Pet 3:10.

⁷¹Damsteegt, 374-375. Lehmann, 902. See also Rev 1:7; Matt 24:30-31; 1 Thess 4:16.

⁷²Damsteegt, 377. Johnsson, 810. See also Matt 24:30; 1 Thess 4:17.

⁷³Haddad and Smith, "The Anti-Christ," 515. The Bible gives strong warnings against any earthly appearances of Jesus (Matt 24:24-26).

⁷⁴Poston, "The Second Coming," 109. Hasel and Hasel see the Golden Gate leading to the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem as an eschatologically important place for Islam, since Muslims believe that this is where the final judgment will take place. Michael G. Hasel and Giselle S. Hasel, *Jerusalem: An Illustrated Archaeological Guide and Journal* (Collegedale, TN: Lynn H. Wood Archaeological Museum, 2016), 55.

earthly reign, Adventists believe that Jesus will take His saints to reign with Him in heaven for one thousand years.⁷⁵

In summary, Adventists and Muslims both agree that Jesus will come again and that natural disasters will be a sign prior to His coming. The disagreement lies in what will occur once He comes. This doctrine supports the hope and assurance the Bible gives that Jesus is the key to receiving paradise. Muslims will need to be led to realize that Jesus does much more than kill pigs and destroy crosses at His coming. Instead, He is coming to take His followers to heaven. Tied with this belief is a correct understanding of what happens when a person dies, which is covered in the next section.

The State of the Dead and Hellfire

Death is another thorny issue which separates Adventists and Muslims. The division centers on the issues of immortality, the state of the soul at death, and the eternal destiny of the wicked. One thing both Adventists and Muslims seem to agree on is that immortality is inherent only in God.⁷⁶ Death for Adventists is simply the

⁷⁵Damsteegt, 404. Eric Claude Webster, "The Millenium," in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, Vol. 12, ed. Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 930. See also Rev 20:6.

⁷⁶Damsteegt, 388. Jane I. Smith, "Reflections on Aspects of Immortality in Islam," *Harvard Theological Review* 70, no. 1-2 (January/April 1977): 85. Andreasen clarifies the Adventist position, saying that humans can only possess conditional immortality, and only after the resurrection. God alone possesses unconditional immortality. Niels-Erik A. Andreasen, "Death: Origin, Nature, and Final Eradication," in

result of sin,⁷⁷ while immortality is a gift given by God at the Second Coming.⁷⁸ Muslims believe that immortality is earned through both obedience to God's commands⁷⁹ and belonging to the Muslim community.⁸⁰ Adventists agree in some aspects that eternal life is conditioned by perfect obedience;⁸¹ however, man in his fallen state is incapable of meeting those demands, which necessitated the plan of salvation.⁸²

Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology, Vol. 12, ed. Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 318. See also 1 Tim 1:17; 6:15-16.

⁷⁷Damsteegt, 389. Andreasen, 318. See also Rom 5:12, 6:23; 1 Cor 15:56; Jas 1:15; Ezek 18:20.

⁷⁸Damsteegt, 390. Andreasen, 318. See also 1 Cor 15:51-55; Rom 6:23.

⁷⁹Smith, "Reflections," 97. Nickel says that rather than a gift, it is something that is earned. Nickel, 5. Mitchell agrees. Mitchell, 90.

⁸⁰Smith, "Reflections," 91. Friedmann, in support of Smith, states that once Judaism and Christianity were corrupted, true religion was lost until Islam came. Once Islam came, it made void every other religion, meaning that salvation could only exist within its own boundaries. Yohanán Friedmann, *Tolerance and Coercion in Islam: Interfaith Relations in the Muslim Tradition* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 14.

⁸¹Damsteegt, 389. See also Rom 2:7; Rev 22:14; Matt 19:16-22. Andreasen agrees that immortality is conditional but, in disagreement with Damsteegt, states that immortality is based solely on the condition of accepting God's free gift of salvation through Jesus Christ. Andreasen, 340. See also John 3:16; Rom 6:23; Eph 2:8-9; 1 John 5:11.

⁸²Damsteegt, 108. Fowler agrees, saying that only through the redemptive work of Jesus are we set free from sin's power. John M. Fowler, "Sin," in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, Vol. 12, ed. Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 250.

Adventists believe that mankind by nature is a mortal soul created from the dust of the earth and God's life-giving spirit breathed into him.⁸³ Neither the soul nor the spirit is considered an immortal conscious entity that survives death.⁸⁴ Instead, at death the force of life which God breathed into mankind returns to Him, and the soul perishes.⁸⁵

In Islam there is confusion about the state of man at death. This is because "the Qur'an says little about what happens to individuals between the time of bodily death and the resurrection."⁸⁶ The most common belief is that the angel of death pulls the soul out of the body at death⁸⁷ and

⁸³Damsteegt, 391. Cairus comments that both men and animals were created from the earth, and both have the breath of life. Cairus, 213. See also Gen 2:7; 3:19; Eccl 3:20.

⁸⁴Damsteegt, 388. Andreasen, 317. See also Ezek 18:4; Matt 10:28.

⁸⁵Damsteegt, 391-392. Andreasen, 316-317. See also Eccl 12:7; Job 34:14-15; Ps 104:29.

⁸⁶Smith, "Reflections," 88. Smith says that most of the beliefs concerning death come from tradition, not the Qur'an. Ibid.

⁸⁷Rkia Elaroui Cornell, "Death and Burial in Islam," in *Voices of Islam*, Vol. 3, ed. Vincent J. Cornell (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2007), 157. Smith states that the soul is mortal and only the spirit is immortal, which makes the soul surviving death a contradiction. Jane I. Smith, "The Understanding of Nafs and Ruh in Contemporary Muslim Considerations of the Nature of Sleep and Death," *Muslim World* 69, no. 3 (July 1979): 159. Smith also says that the words "spirit" and "soul" are often used interchangeably, which may explain some of the confusion. Ibid., 152. However, Smith also says that the reason for the distinction between soul and spirit is that the spirit came from God and is therefore immortal, since God is immortal. Ibid., "Reflections," 85.

takes it to the seven gates of heaven.⁸⁸ The righteous pass through all the gates and eventually meet God,⁸⁹ while the wicked are rejected at the first gate and are sent back.⁹⁰ The righteous and the wicked are both sent back to their graves to await the resurrection.⁹¹

For Adventists death "is only a state of temporary unconsciousness while the person awaits the resurrection."⁹² However, Islamic scholars contend that the soul is conscious in the grave⁹³ and continues to hear and feel even after death.⁹⁴ Those souls that have done wickedly are continually tormented until the resurrection.⁹⁵

In Islam the ultimate destiny of all souls will be decided on judgment day, when the wicked will be condemned

⁸⁸Smith, "Reflections," 88. Cornell, "Death and Burial," 157. Hasel and Hasel say that "Muslim tradition points to the Golden Gate leading to the Dome of the Rock as the very gates of paradise." Hasel and Hasel, 54.

⁸⁹Smith, "Reflections," 92. Cornell shares that in Islam there is no clarity on whether or not the soul actually sees God. Cornell, "Death and Burial," 158.

⁹⁰Smith, "Reflections," 93. Cornell, "Death and Burial," 158.

⁹¹Smith, "Reflections," 92. Cornell disagrees with Smith, seeing that the wicked will fall into hell at the denial of the first gate. Cornell, "Death and Burial," 158.

⁹²Damsteegt, 390. Andreasen, 325. See also Deut 31:16; 1 Kgs 2:10; Job 14:12; Dan 12:2; Matt 9:24-27; John 11:11; Acts 7:60; 1 Cor 15:18; 1 Thess 4:13.

⁹³Smith, "Reflections," 93.

⁹⁴Cornell, "Death and Burial," 159.

⁹⁵Smith, "Reflections," 93.

to burn forever in the fiery pits of hell and the righteous will inherit heaven.⁹⁶ For Adventists the idea of an ever-burning hell is incongruent with conceptions of a loving God.⁹⁷ The wicked will be destroyed by fire at the end of the millennium, which Adventists see as the second and final death.⁹⁸

In summary, the issue of death is tied to the doctrine of salvation, since the wages of sin is death. It is also tied to the Second Coming, since the resurrection will break the chains of death. Since death is both a mystery and something to be feared within Islam, it is a key doctrine that can be used to help a Muslim accept both salvation and the Second Coming of Jesus to take us to heaven, as these two doctrines reveal that death can be conquered. The non-immortality of the soul also provides an opportunity to reveal that hellfire will consume the wicked

⁹⁶Einar Thomassen, "Islamic Hell," *Numen: International Review for the History of Religions* 56, no. 2-3 (2009): 402. See also Alavi, 38. Smith says that some scholars believe that God will eventually put out the fires of hell. Smith, "Reflections," 98. Thomassen does not agree, but believes that the torments of hell will continue throughout eternity. Thomassen, 404. See also Sura 35:36. Adventists also see that the ultimate destiny of the dead will be decided on judgment day. Andreasen, 333.

⁹⁷Damsteegt, 403. In addition, Andreasen says that hellfire is incongruent with the Adventist doctrine of the state of the dead. Andreasen, 333-334.

⁹⁸Damsteegt, 395. See also Webster, 933. Hasel affirms that the destruction of the wicked is not a passive withdrawal by God, but an act of judgment and the final destruction of sin initiated by God. Gerhard F. Hasel, "Divine Judgment," in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, Vol. 12, ed. Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 848. See also Rev 20:9; Mal 4:1; Ps 37:38.

and cannot be eternal. The final section will cover Adventist and Muslim views on holy living and God's holy day of worship.

The Sabbath and Holy Living

One of the key doctrines and practices for Adventists is worshipping on the seventh-day Sabbath. Adventists worship on Saturday, in honor of Creation and out of obedience to the fourth commandment.⁹⁹ The Sabbath hours are a sacred time of required rest from all labor.¹⁰⁰ Muslims, however, hold Friday as a communal day of prayer.¹⁰¹ Muslims believe that Friday will continue to be the day of worship even in heaven,¹⁰² while Adventists contend that the day of worship in heaven will be the weekly Sabbath.¹⁰³ These

⁹⁹Damsteegt, 281. Strand makes the connection that the basis for keeping the Sabbath is humanity's relationship to God as Creator, who is worthy of worship, and also as Lord, who is worthy of obedience. Kenneth A. Strand, "The Sabbath," in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, Vol. 12, ed. Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing, 2000), 509. See also Gen 2:2-3; Exod 20:8-11; Isa 66:22-23; John 14:15.

¹⁰⁰Damsteegt, 290. Strand, 496. See also Isa 58:13-14.

¹⁰¹Alavi, 12. Samaan says that Friday worship may have helped Muslims distinguish themselves from Christians and Jews in the early days. Samman, *Blood Brothers*, 97.

¹⁰²Smith, "Reflections," 97.

¹⁰³Damsteegt, 287. Shea agrees that humanity will worship on the Sabbath in heaven, but also sees humanity's first Sabbath in heaven mirroring the first Sabbath in the Garden of Eden. William H. Shea, "Creation," in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, Vol. 12, ed. Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 434. See also Isa 66:22-23.

divergent views and practices certainly present a challenge.

A final area of practice where there seems to be strong agreement is in regards to lifestyle. Both Adventists and Muslims abstain from alcohol and pork.¹⁰⁴ While Adventists promote a vegetarian lifestyle,¹⁰⁵ they avoid unclean meats, as do their Muslim counterparts.¹⁰⁶ Muslims and Adventists both seek to live holy lives demonstrated through modest dress.¹⁰⁷ In conclusion, a desire for holiness is a doctrine which Muslims appreciate and identify with.¹⁰⁸

In summary, both Adventists and Muslims find a high level of agreement in health laws and holy living. The disagreement comes over the day of worship. However, before the day of worship is addressed, the Bible should be

¹⁰⁴Dunton, 132. Mitchell, 84. Damsteegt agrees, giving as a basis that alcohol was not present in Eden. Damsteegt, 315.

¹⁰⁵Damsteegt, 318. George W. Reid, "Health and Healing," in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, Vol. 12, ed. Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing, 2000), 775. Bradford says that Adventists practice vegetarianism not only for health reasons, but also out of a concern for the earth and the continual availability of food. Charles E. Bradford, "Stewardship," in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, Vol. 12, ed. Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 667.

¹⁰⁶Reid, 775. Samaan, 97. See also Sura 2:168, 173, 219. Lev 11; Deut 14.

¹⁰⁷Damsteegt, 319. Douglass, 10. Miroslav M. Kis, "Christian Lifestyle and Behavior," in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, Vol. 12, ed. Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 707.

¹⁰⁸Ayoub and Omar, 77.

accepted fully as God's Word, since the Bible clearly indicates that the day of worship is the seventh day.

Now that a theological comparison has been made between Adventism and Islam, it is necessary to move towards the formation of a biblical theology for contextualization. The formation of a theology for contextualization will be based on a high view of the Bible. Chapter Four will deal with these issues and set the stage for surveying models of contextualization and then synthesizing a contextualized approach in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER 4

CONTEXTUALIZATION

Contextualization is reaching people with the gospel from within their own geographic, linguistic, and cultural context.¹ It also includes how the gospel in the biblical context is perceived and communicated from the Christian's own context.² Contextualization affects everything from worship style to biblical translation to evangelism and missions.³

If, then, contextualization has such a broad and essential influence in missions, it must be included as a cornerstone of missions to Muslims. In this chapter a biblical foundation for contextualization will be developed. The main focus will be on New Testament models

¹Phil Parshall, *New Paths to Muslim Evangelism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1980), 31. Dean Flemming, *Contextualization in the New Testament: Patterns for Theology and Mission* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 13-14. Flemming defines a context "by a variety of boundaries: regionality, nationality, culture, language, ethnicity, social and economic status, political structure, education, gender, age, religious or theological tradition, worldviews or values." Ibid., 20.

²Gailyn Van Rheenen, "Syncretism and Contextualization: The Church on a Journey Defining Itself," in *Contextualization and Syncretism: Navigating Cultural Currents*, ed. Gailyn Van Rheenen (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2006), 6. Van Engen sees the interplay of the biblical context, the missionary context, and the mission field context, as all influencing contextualization of the gospel. Charles Van Engen, *Mission on the Way: Issues in Mission Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1996), 23.

³Flemming, 20. Flemming also suggests that "contextualization can occur whenever the gospel engages a new setting or a particular audience." Ibid.

of contextualization, since this is where some of the clearest examples exist. An emphasis will be placed upon discovering principles for defining an appropriate contextualization for missions to Muslims and revealing what constitutes syncretism. The chapter will also include a survey of biblical non-negotiables in contextualization and will conclude by considering the views of Ellen G. White on contextualization.

A Biblical Theology for Contextualization

Contextualization is a vital part of mission.⁴ The reason is because it increases the influence and impact of mission in a given context.⁵ The Apostle Paul understood this and used it as a central part of his biblical mission to win people to Christ.⁶ Contextualization is so essential in mission that Flemming states, "whenever people embrace the truth of the gospel, they must do so in relation to their preexisting worldviews and patterns of relationships if it is going to carry any meaning for them."⁷

⁴Flemming, 25.

⁵Parshall, *New Paths*, 31. In agreement, Poston shares that "consequently, since the mid-twentieth century, nearly all missionary strategies have revolved around attempts to 'indigenize' and 'contextualize' the Christian gospel, Christian Theology, and Christian institutions." Larry Poston, "You Must Not Worship in Their Way: When Contextualization Becomes Syncretism," in *Contextualization and Syncretism: Navigating Cultural Currents*, ed. Gailyn Van Rhee (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2006), 246.

⁶Poston, "You Must Not Worship," 244. See 1 Cor 9:19-22.

⁷Flemming, 121.

Although contextualization is essential to missions, it also presents a major challenge to missions in finding the line between relevancy and preserving the authentic message of Scripture.⁸ This challenge has led to various views of what constitutes valid contextualization in missions.⁹ However, if there is to be a normative practice of contextualization in missions, it must be subject to the authority of an absolute standard.¹⁰ There is consensus among some missiologists that this absolute standard must be the Bible.¹¹

⁸Ibid., 14.

⁹Van Rheenen, "Syncretism," 3. Strauss explains that there are two major positions in contextualization. Some emphasize experience and lean upon the evidences of God's leading in mission as an indicator of appropriate contextualization. Others lean more heavily upon Scripture to set the bar for appropriate contextualization. Steve Strauss, "The Role of Context in Shaping Theology" in *Contextualization and Syncretism: Navigating Cultural Currents*, ed. Gailyn Van Rheenen (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2006), 101. Martin agrees with both Strauss and Van Rheenen. Martin, "An Adventist Theology," 283. Van Engen agrees that the message and motive of mission must be based on Scripture, but sees the practical application happening in real world experience apart from Scripture. Van Engen, 37.

¹⁰Parshall, *New Paths*, 38.

¹¹Donald McGavran, "What is Mission?" in *Contemporary Theologies of Missions*, ed. Arthur F. Glasser and Donald McGavran (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1983), 28. Parshall, *New Paths*, 18. Martin, "An Adventist Theology," 290. Pierson adds that, "any time the Spirit speaks he speaks in accordance with the Scriptures." Pierson, 235. Poston further narrows the criteria for appropriate contextualization and says, "Only those believers who share the conviction that the Bible is the inspired word of God, that it must be interpreted according to a grammatical-historical hermeneutic, and that it must function as their chief—if not sole—authority in matters of belief and practice will have an adequate foundation for construction of a truly Christian culture." Poston, "You Must Not Worship," 257.

The Bible is not only the absolute standard, but also the normative guide for the formulation of a contextualized mission.¹² As a guide, the whole of Scripture must be considered, as opposed to a few select texts.¹³ This does not mean that all of Scripture must be taken as a rigid and precise pattern; rather, Scripture serves as a model and guide in synthesizing an appropriate contextualized approach.¹⁴

Jesus: The Supreme Model

The main focus of Scripture is Christ (Luke 24:25-27; John 5:39; Acts 10:43); therefore, all genuine mission will focus on Christ and His mission.¹⁵ The apostles followed this principle by making Christ the cornerstone of their preaching (Acts 4:8-12; 10:42-43). Paul makes this point

¹²Flemming, 24.

¹³Glasser, 31. Parshall agrees, stating that the Apostle Paul took the authority of the whole Bible as a non-negotiable in his contextualized approach. Parshall, *New Paths*, 35. Moreau also agrees. Scott Moreau, "Contextualization, Syncretism, and Spiritual Warfare: Identifying the Issues," in *Contextualization and Syncretism: Navigating Cultural Currents*, ed. Gailyn Van Rheenen (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2006), 48.

¹⁴Flemming, 296.

¹⁵Van Engen, 19. Stansell adds that following Jesus' pattern will keep missions from straying into syncretism. Ron Stansell, "The Lamb and The Emperor: Theologies of Revelation Countering Syncretism," in *Contextualization and Syncretism: Navigating Cultural Currents*, ed. Gailyn Van Rheenen (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2006), 131.

clear by saying, "I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified" (1 Cor 2:2).¹⁶

Christ is not only the focus of Scripture, but He is also the supreme model for authentic mission in Scripture.¹⁷ Escobar makes this profound missiological comment, saying, "If Christ is at the center of the gospel and of missionary activity, his way of being God's missionary also becomes a pattern for life and mission" (John 14:12).¹⁸ Therefore, any missionary activity that ignores the methods, message, or uniqueness of Jesus cannot be considered God's mission (1 John 2:22-23; John 14:6).¹⁹

¹⁶Unless otherwise noted, all references to biblical texts are taken from the New King James Version.

¹⁷Escobar, 25. Martin, "An Adventist Theology," 10. Flemming agrees, stating that Jesus was our example in contextualization. Flemming, 23. Van Engen adds that Christ's mission is identical to God's mission. Van Engen, 255. White adds, "The World's Redeemer was the great model missionary." Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948), 5:385.

¹⁸Escobar, 106. Manassian agrees, stating that Jesus is also the model for evangelism. Johnny Manassian, "Sacrificial System - A Viable Approach," in *The Three Angels and the Crescent: A Reader*, eds. Jonquil Hole and Borge Schantz (Bracknell, Berkshire, England: SDA Global Centre for Islamic Studies, 1993), 177. This is a foundational concept of the Seventh-day Adventist understanding of mission. In support of this concept, White said, "Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Saviour mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, Follow Me." Ellen G. White, *Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1942), 143.

¹⁹Escobar, 111.

The first way Jesus models contextualization is through incarnation.²⁰ Jesus became human, entered into the Jewish culture, spoke the local language, and engaged in familiar social elements to convey His message (John 1:14; Gal 4:4).²¹ Jesus participated in a culturally Jewish wedding (John 2:1-2), addressed His mother according to traditional oriental style (John 2:4),²² and accommodated the Jewish customs of hospitality (John 2:8-9), all revealing the degree to which He was willing to incarnate fully into the Jewish context. Flemming states that "the incarnation of Jesus makes contextualization not just a possibility but an obligation. It establishes a paradigm for mediating God's redeeming presence in the world today."²³

This incarnational model is mirrored by the Apostle Paul.²⁴ In support of incarnation, Paul says, in a cornerstone verse of contextualization:

²⁰J. Dudley Woodberry, "To the Muslim I Became a Muslim," in *Contextualization and Syncretism: Navigating Cultural Currents*, ed. Gailyn Van Rheenen (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2006), 146. Escobar, 107.

²¹Flemming, 20. Woodberry adds that the context Jesus incarnated into is comparable to a Muslim context. Woodberry, 146.

²²Ellen White, *Desire of Ages* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2005), 146.

²³Flemming, 21.

²⁴Flemming, 127. Manassian sees the example of incarnation set by Paul as a model for missionaries to preach the gospel from Muslim books, from a Muslim religious perspective, and from a Muslim culture. Manassian, 176. In partial agreement, this writer views Muslim books

For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more; and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law; to those who are without law, as without law . . . to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some (1 Cor 9:19-22).

Paul modeled incarnational interaction within the culture to reach more people with the gospel.²⁵ However, that interaction occurred within the boundaries of Scripture.²⁶ A closer look at the verse reveals that Paul is willing to incarnate on the cultural level (1 Cor 9:20-21), certainly on a linguistic level, and even on a socio-economic level (1 Cor 9:22), but Paul is not willing to compromise the gospel message (Gal 1:8-9).²⁷ Neither will Paul sacrifice his religious identity and take on the religious identity of the pagans by participating with them in idolatry (1 Cor 6:9-11).²⁸ The example of Paul reveals that contextualization must not compromise the gospel message or one's Christian identity.

and religious perspectives as an appropriate starting place for sharing the gospel. However, there should be a deliberate plan to replace Islamic sources by the Bible, so that the Bible becomes the primary authority for spiritual instruction. Appendix A gives a more in-depth analysis of this viewpoint.

²⁵Flemming, 134.

²⁶Ibid., 196.

²⁷Van Rheenen, *Missions*, 32. See also Fleming, 124.

²⁸Martin, "An Adventist Theology," 231.

Another model Jesus gave was the tailoring of His message for different audiences.²⁹ Jesus used water to share the gospel with a thirsty woman (John 4:4). He called Himself the "Bread of Life" in the presence of a hungry crowd (John 6:1-15, 22-29). To a blind man Jesus proclaimed Himself as the "Light of the World" (John 8:12). At the tomb of Lazarus, Jesus revealed Himself as the "Resurrection and the Life" (John 11:1-44). Whatever was the most familiar to His audience became the vehicle through which Christ brought the gospel to His hearers.³⁰

Although Jesus interacted with cultures on their most intimate level, His focus was the total conversion of mankind (John 8:32, 35-36).³¹ For Jesus a non-negotiable in contextualization was that mission must convert and transform lives (John 3:3; 2 Cor 5:17).³² It must confront the fallen nature of humanity and lead towards repentance

²⁹Ibid., 261. Parshall, *New Paths*, 31.

³⁰Martin, "An Adventist Theology," 32. Flemming, 261.

³¹Escobar, 106. McGavran gives a definition for conversion by saying, "the word conversion has classically and biblically meant 'turning from other gods, self, and sin to belief in Christ as Lord, and Savior, and becoming a member of His body, the church.'" Donald McGavran, "New Mission," in *Contemporary Theologies of Missions*, ed. Arthur F. Glasser and Donald McGavran (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1983), 54.

³²Alberto R. Timm, "Historical Background of Adventist Biblical Interpretation," in *Understanding Scripture: An Adventist Approach*, ed. George W. Reid, Vol. 1, Biblical Research Institute Studies (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2005), 2. Escobar emphasizes that the mission of Christ required a new birth. Escobar, 110. Hesselgrave concurs, adding that contextualization's aim is for previous worldviews to be replaced by a Christian worldview. David J. Hesselgrave, "Syncretism: Mission and

and faith in Christ (Acts 3:19).³³ However, it is not culture per se that must be confronted and transformed, but the sin that exists within culture.³⁴

This transformation, which produces a new Christlike character, is evidence of God's Spirit working in mission (John 16:7-10).³⁵ This transformation will manifest as a new transcultural Christian identity, which will change how one interacts with all levels of society (Rom 12:2; Gal 3:26-28; Eph 4:22-24).³⁶ Appendix A defines in greater detail how Seventh-day Adventists understand this new Christian identity in Muslim evangelism.

The New Testament Church Model

Jesus not only served as the supreme model for contextualization, but also gave instructions on how mission was to be carried out by the church worldwide.³⁷ The instructions given in Acts 1:8 laid out a plan of expansion that would cross geographic, cultural, and linguistic

Missionary Induced," in *Contextualization and Syncretism: Navigating Cultural Currents*, ed. Gailyn Van Rheenen (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2006), 78.

³³Parshall, *New Paths*, 84.

³⁴Flemming, 142. Hesselgrave agrees and also states that without this, syncretism can result. Hesselgrave, 91. This writer also agrees.

³⁵Escobar, 124. Pierson defines this transformation of character as leading "us to be obedient to God in every level of our lives." Pierson, 235.

³⁶Poston, "You Must Not Worship," 256-258.

³⁷Van Engen, 142.

barriers.³⁸ Pentecost was the starting place for the church in crossing these barriers.³⁹ Contextualization was the result of following Jesus' plan to reach the world.⁴⁰

As the Holy Spirit was poured out during Pentecost, something new in mission happened.⁴¹ The gospel was dynamically translated so that each person would hear it contextualized into his or her own mother tongue.⁴² This example of contextualization through language was broadened later by the Apostle Paul to include using pagan words as a vehicle to convey a Christian theology and worldview.⁴³ This use of language in mission sets down a missiological

³⁸Pierson, 21-22.

³⁹Ibid., 41.

⁴⁰Flemming, 30.

⁴¹Pierson, 26. Van Engen agrees. Van Engen, 254.

⁴²Pierson, 22. Flemming suggests that the translation of the Gospel was not a necessity, since those who gathered at Pentecost in Jerusalem would have understood Greek or Aramaic to some degree. Instead, it reveals God's endorsement for the gospel to reach people through their own heart language. Flemming, 31. In addition, this writer also sees that the dynamic translation of the gospel at Pentecost provided a prophetic confirmation of the gospel, as Peter indicates in Acts 2:16-21.

⁴³Flemming, 219. Cooper warns that there is a high danger of syncretism in giving non-Christian elements a Christian label. Michael T. Cooper, "Post-Constantinian Missions: Lessons from the Resurgence of Paganism," in *Contextualization and Syncretism: Navigating Cultural Currents*, ed. Gailyn Van Rheenen (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2006), 197. This writer agrees with Cooper, seeing that Christian labels can not sanctify elements which are not in harmony with Scripture. Any element out of harmony with Scripture must be abandoned or modified to harmonize with Scripture.

principle that ideas, concepts, and meaning are more important than the specific words in contextualization.⁴⁴

Although Pentecost represents the gospel's crossing linguistic barriers, the story of Cornelius was a breakthrough for contextualized missions as the gospel broke out of Jewish culture and began to interact with the Gentile world (Acts 10:34-36).⁴⁵ It reveals the inclusive nature of genuine contextualization with regards to national, cultural, and ethnic identity.⁴⁶ However, inclusiveness in contextualization must be balanced by Scripture, or Christianity will lose its uniqueness among world religions.⁴⁷

This does not mean that Scripture must be used in every situation to convey the gospel to a specific context, as Peter demonstrated by not quoting Scripture in his

⁴⁴Flemming, 111. Kraft agrees that meaning is more important than the words or form, stating that forms are simply a vehicle to convey meaning and concepts. Charles H. Kraft, *Christianity in Culture: A Study in Dynamic Biblical Theologizing in Cross-Cultural Perspective* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1979), 65. Moraueu argues that God is willing to bypass words and contextualize the gospel through vivid dreams. This is a valid form of contextualization today, since the majority of world cultures see dreams as legitimate spiritual encounters. Moraueu, 57.

⁴⁵Flemming, 35. Both Flemming and Pierson recognize that God was working in Cornelius' life long before Peter arrived. Flemming, 36. Pierson, 202.

⁴⁶Flemming, 37.

⁴⁷Poston, "The Current State of Islam," 15. Pierson agrees, pointing towards a balance between unity in the church and allowable cultural diversity. Pierson, 345. See also Appendix A for further details on the line between inclusiveness and preserving a Seventh-day Adventist identity in Muslim evangelism.

sermon to Cornelius.⁴⁸ Instead, it is the thoughts and ideas behind the biblical text that must not be lost; the message, not specific words, must be shared.⁴⁹ This method employed by Peter is duplicated by Paul, who even used quotes from pagan poets rather than Scripture to convey the essential gospel message.⁵⁰ Ultimately, the gospel message preached by the apostles transcends all cultures and time periods, while still speaking to every culture in every time period.⁵¹

After the encounter with Cornelius, mission moved outward into the surrounding cultures, where additional barriers made contextualization a necessity.⁵² This introduced new challenges which climaxed at the Jerusalem Council, where the New Testament church dealt with these emerging contextualization issues (Acts 15:1-29).⁵³ The

⁴⁸Flemming, 41.

⁴⁹Ibid., 154. Parshall states, "there is no ultimate methodology, only an ultimate message." Parshall, *New Paths*, 17.

⁵⁰Flemming, 74-75.

⁵¹Strauss, 103. Fleming agrees, stating that the culture must not change the truth of Scripture. Fleming, 163.

⁵²Flemming, 33.

⁵³Ibid., 43. Tennent says that this was the "first formal church discussion regarding the relationship between these two distinct cultural communities, Jewish and Gentile." Tennent, "Followers of Jesus," 105. Both Strauss and Hiebert see submitting issues of contextualization to the wider world church, as was modeled by the Jerusalem Council, as an effective way to keep the church in various cultures from drifting into syncretism. Strauss, 120. Paul G. Hiebert, "Syncretism and Social Paradigms," in *Contextualization and Syncretism: Navigating Cultural Currents*, ed. Gailyn Van Rheenen (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2006), 44.

focal issue was whether circumcision was a necessary condition for church membership (Acts 15:1).⁵⁴ The Council decided to allow church membership without requiring circumcision (Acts 15:19).⁵⁵ Some say that this accommodation allowed the Gentiles to retain both their cultural and religious identity.⁵⁶ However, it is important to note that this was not a religious compromise and was not intended to open the door towards pluralism.⁵⁷ Instead, this accommodation marked a change in how the church viewed the covenant and their identity as God's people.⁵⁸ The Apostle Paul later clarified this position by saying,

⁵⁴Van Rheenen, *Missions*, 108. See also Flemming, 44. Tennent, "Followers of Jesus," 105.

⁵⁵Flemming, 46. Parshall states that in this growing church, Paul "saw no reason to legislate that Gentiles must come to Christ through a Judaistic route." Parshall, *New Paths*, 33. Martin agrees with Parshall, seeing that this accommodation indicated that the Christian faith was no longer exclusively a Jewish sect but a universal religious movement. Martin, *Christianity*, 318-319. Bert Beach, "Evangelism and Interfaith Relations," in *Ministry Magazine* (December 2002); <http://ministrymagazine.org/archive/2002/December/evangelism-and-interfaith-relations> (accessed October 4, 2010), 18. Van Rheenen also agrees, stating that this set a precedent that "those from another culture should not be compelled to conform to the cultural patterns of the sending culture." Van Rheenen, *Missions*, 108. Tennent also agrees, seeing this as an accommodation to culture. Tennent, "Followers of Jesus," 105.

⁵⁶Tennent, "Followers of Jesus," 105.

⁵⁷Tennent, "Followers of Jesus," 106. Martin agrees, saying that "culture should be embraced only to the extent that it does not cause theological syncretism." Carlos G. Martin, "Biblical Perspectives Related to Contextualization Among Muslims," *Asia-Africa Journal of Mission and Ministry* 2 (June 2010): 5.

⁵⁸Flemming, 46. Tennent, "Followers of Jesus," 105-106.

For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God (Rom 2:28-29).

In addition to allowing membership without the requirement of circumcision, the Jerusalem Council also decided that the Gentiles needed to observe certain kosher food laws. Tennent says that this was "to visibly separate the Gentiles from their former religious identity as pagans, since all four of these prohibitions are linked to common pagan practices at the time"⁵⁹ It was also implemented in order to avoid controversy and offense in the new church, which would allow Gentiles and Jews to eat together.⁶⁰ These prohibitions by the Jerusalem Council reveal the willingness of the church to accommodate on non-essentials for the sake of unity.⁶¹ Finally, the Gentiles were told to observe sexual purity (Acts 15:20).⁶²

The final decisions made by the Jerusalem Council were based on the combination of testimonies from the mission

⁵⁹Tennent, "Followers of Jesus," 105.

⁶⁰Parshall, *New Paths*, 34. Flemming, 47. Van Rheenen, *Missions*, 108.

⁶¹Flemming, 50. Parshall agrees, saying that Paul later allows the very things prohibited by the Jerusalem Council. Parshall, *New Paths*, 34. Van Rheenen, *Missions*, 108. See Rom 14:13-23; 1 Cor 8:7-13. Martin clarifies that non-essentials would not have included doctrines, since biblical doctrines transcend culture. Carlos G. Martin, "How Should the Church Contextualize For Muslims?" *Perspective Digest* 13, no. 4 (2008), 19.

⁶²See Acts 15:28-29.

field (Acts 15:12), experiential evidence of God's Spirit (Acts 15:7-11), and biblical confirmation (Acts 15:13-18).⁶³ The ultimate standard for contextualization in the Jerusalem Council came from Scripture.⁶⁴ This is clearly seen when, after the experiential evidence that Paul and Barnabas gave, James appeals to the authority of Scripture by saying, "and with this the words of the prophets agree" (Acts 15:15). Only after the confirmation of Scripture does the Council affirm a contextualized resolution (Acts 15:19). Experience is a valid source from which a contextualized approach may be constructed. However, authentic experiential evidences of God's Spirit will always be in subordination to, in harmony with, and confirmed by the Scriptures.⁶⁵

Another area where contextualization is modeled in the New Testament church was through the mission practice of the Apostle Paul. One of the first principles that is

⁶³Flemming, 48-49. Van Rheenen also sees the blending of different sources of authority as having influenced the decision of the Council by saying, "Paul and Barnabas argued from ministry . . . James argued from Scripture." Van Rheenen, *Missions*, 108.

⁶⁴Woodberry, 151. Van Rheenen explains that Bible-based contextualization makes Scripture the priority and starting point. Genuine contextualization will always begin with the authoritative truth of the Bible. Van Rheenen, "Syncretism," 4. This writer agrees.

⁶⁵Pierson, 235. This writer sees that there is a danger that biblical texts will be used to support experience. In this scenario, the biblical message is interpreted to fit the experience, which leaves a greater risk of misinterpreting texts. However, if the biblical texts are the starting point for all contextualization strategies, then experience can be used appropriately to confirm Scripture, rather than the reverse.

discovered in Paul's three major sermons to Antioch, Lystra, and Athens is his focus on finding areas of agreement to build upon.⁶⁶ The differences between Paul and his audience were present but were not highlighted in Paul's preaching.⁶⁷ Instead, Paul modeled the principle that "all cultures have virtues and values that can be affirmed and drawn into the service of the gospel."⁶⁸

Paul also believed that there were certain non-negotiables that should never be abandoned in the process of contextualization.⁶⁹ Those areas included the exclusive worship of and unique identity of God (Acts 17:22-29), the moral depravity of humanity and need for repentance (Acts 17:30), God's judgment of mankind (Acts 17:31), and the unique identity and atoning work of Jesus Christ (1 Cor 2:2).⁷⁰ This reveals a pattern used by Paul, that biblical

⁶⁶Flemming, 84. Accad also sees finding areas of agreement as foundational to mission practice. Accad, 29. See Acts 14:15; 13:26; 17:22.

⁶⁷Flemming, 76.

⁶⁸Ibid., 130.

⁶⁹Ibid., 90.

⁷⁰Ibid., 82. Parshall agrees, seeing the doctrines of the Trinity, heaven, hell, and the uniqueness of Christ as non-negotiables. Parshall, *New Paths*, 83, 84, 52. Stansell adds that the absolute Lordship of Christ must not be lost. Stansell, 131. Flemming agrees with Stansell. Flemming, 232. Parshall also points to the historical narrative and salvific realities of Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension as non-negotiable. Parshall, *New Paths*, 83-84. Flemming agrees with Parshall. Flemming, 94. See 1 Cor 1:23; 15:3-4; 2 Cor 4:4. Parshall also adds the doctrine of Jesus' Second Coming as a non-negotiable. Parshall, *New Paths*, 84. This writer agrees with the list of non-negotiables offered by these authors, but would also broaden the list to include all of the doctrines of the Seventh-day Adventist

doctrines are non-negotiable and must not be altered in the process of contextualization.⁷¹

Finally, Jesus, the apostles, and Paul all viewed one unified remnant church that would gather people from other religions into membership within its body as a non-negotiable (John 10:16; Rev 18:4; 1 Pet 2:5,9; Rom 11:17-23).⁷² An Adventist understanding of the remnant church as it relates to Muslims is defined in Appendix A. The principle that guided the biblical church and which guides the church today in defining non-negotiables and in deciding what is appropriate contextualization is that beliefs, practices, and identity must be rooted in Scripture.⁷³

Church. It is the cultural elements in the church, not the doctrines, that can be modified, adapted, or changed.

⁷¹Martin, "How Should the Church," 19.

⁷²Van Rheenen, "Syncretism," 20. Poston adds that not only is fellowship non-negotiable (Heb 10:24-25), but also that baptism must precede full membership (1 Cor 13-16), that membership participation must be a requirement (1 Cor 14:26), that there must be order and decency in worship (1 Cor 14:26-33), that spiritual songs must be a part of worship (Eph 5:19), that both men and women must worship together (1 Cor 11:5; 14:34-35), and that communion must be a non-negotiable part of fellowship (1 Cor 10:14-17; 11:17-34). Poston, "You Must Not Worship," 259-260. Flemming summarizes that appropriate contextualization must draw to Christ and strengthen the bond of the church. Flemming, 188-189. This writer agrees that church membership, participation, and order in worship are important to preserve the identity and unity of the church and should be included as non-negotiable elements. In addition, this writer also concurs that communion should be retained as a non-negotiable element, since it is a doctrine. However, this writer sees Poston's inclusion of songs and the mixing of genders in worship as moving outside of doctrines and into non-essential cultural elements where accommodation is permissible.

⁷³Hiebert, 44. Parshall agrees that Scripture must be the authority. Parshall, *New Paths*, 83. Flemming, 129.

In conclusion, appropriate contextualization will center on Jesus' life and work, aiming at total conversion. This conversion will bring the new believer into a life obedient to Christ and His Word, and will include baptism by immersion into the remnant church. It will include renouncing all non-biblical religious beliefs and practices, as well as renouncing the believer's previous religious identity. It is, however, equally clear that appropriate contextualization will use non-essential elements of culture that are in harmony with Scripture as a vehicle to proclaiming the gospel. Whatever medium that can be used to convey the truth in relevant ways, including language, culture, and even non-Christian writings and words may be employed. Now that a biblical theology for contextualization has been defined, it is important to look at a biblical view of syncretism.

A Biblical View of Syncretism

For Adventists the concern over syncretism runs especially deep, since Adventism was birthed from a reformatory movement calling people out of syncretism into the unadulterated truth of God's Word.⁷⁴ In addition, the meta-narrative for all Adventist theology, the "Great Controversy," is about the syncretistic mixing of truth and

⁷⁴Angel Manuel Rodriguez, "Dealing with Syncretism in Insider Movements: Response to Jon Paulien's Paper," in *Faith Development in Context: Symposium Papers*, ed. Bruce L. Bauer (Berrien Springs, MI: Department of World Mission, Andrews University, 2005), 255.

error.⁷⁵ The pressing question for Adventist mission in a Muslim context is, Where should the line be drawn between contextualization and syncretism?⁷⁶ Drawing this line can be difficult, since to some degree syncretism can not be avoided,⁷⁷ due in part to its occurring unintentionally at times.⁷⁸ It is also difficult since the line between the two is not always clear and can change based on the situation.⁷⁹ This may be why Seventh-day Adventists have struggled to adopt a single model for reaching Muslims.⁸⁰

Another major risk in a contextualized approach to Muslims is the danger of reverse conversion. Muslims may be just as interested in contextualizing the Islamic message for a Christian as a Christian may be in contextualizing the gospel for them.⁸¹ Islamic evangelization of Christians is particularly dangerous, because Muslims are very

⁷⁵Ibid.

⁷⁶Ibid., 253. Pierson agrees, saying that "when any missionary goes into a new culture to evangelize and to plant the church, the question arises, How does the missionary and the new Christian community decide which elements in that culture can be retained in worship, and which must be rejected?" Pierson, 84.

⁷⁷Paulien, 218.

⁷⁸Rodriguez, 253.

⁷⁹Paulien, 236. Rodriguez agrees. Rodriguez, 253. Van Rheenen also agrees. Van Rheenen, "Syncretism," 3.

⁸⁰Roennfeldt, 32.

⁸¹Poston, "The Current State of Islam," 12.

tolerant of syncretism.⁸² It is therefore necessary that Christians witnessing to Muslims should guard against syncretism.⁸³

According to Van Rheenen, "Syncretism is the blending of beliefs and practices with those of the dominant culture so that Christianity loses its distinctiveness and speaks with a voice reflective of its culture."⁸⁴ Unfortunately, syncretism exists as an unavoidable part of the human context.⁸⁵ The Bible pictures God's people drifting into syncretism over and over throughout the Old and New Testaments.⁸⁶ The descendants of righteous Noah, Abraham's own paternal family, drifted into syncretism (Josh 24:2). The family of Abraham's grandson Jacob drifted into syncretism (Gen 35:2-4). Four hundred years in Egyptian slavery had led Israel into syncretism (Josh 24:14). Once established in Canaan, syncretism led to Israel's captivity by Assyria (2 Kgs 17:16-18) and Judah's captivity by Babylon (Jer 11:9-13). When some Israelites were

⁸²Abdat-Isa, 28.

⁸³Roy Oksnevad, "Christ the Victor," in *The Gospel for Islam*, eds. Roy Oksnevad and Dotsey Welliver (Wheaton, IL: Evangelism and Missions Information Service, 2001), 90-91.

⁸⁴Van Rheenen, "Syncretism," 7-8. Parshall, *New Paths*, 45. Flemming broadens the definition to mean "the mixing of incompatible religious ideas and practices." Flemming, 214.

⁸⁵Parshall, *New Paths*, 45. See also Van Rheenen, "Syncretism," 8.

⁸⁶Van Rheenen, "Syncretism," 13.

reestablished in Samaria, they again drifted into syncretism, worshipping God in addition to the gods of the other nations (2 Kgs 17:33). Even in the New Testament, the Apostle Paul seeks to combat this slide into syncretism, which was prevalent among some new converts (Col 2:8-10).⁸⁷

These examples of syncretism in Scripture might have been prevented, had Israel followed the model which God gave them.⁸⁸ In Deuteronomy 12:1-4, God commanded Israel to reject all elements that were exclusively part of the idolatry of pagan religions.⁸⁹ However, this model did not mean that God was opposed to contextualization. Archaeology confirms that some pagan religious elements were shared in both Israelite and pagan religious practices.⁹⁰ In addition,

⁸⁷Ibid., 12.

⁸⁸Ibid., 11.

⁸⁹Poston, "You Must Not Worship," 245. Poston sees this as a valid pattern for rejecting anything that resembles Islamic places of worship and Islamic practices used exclusively for worship. Even the Islamic name for God, Allah, is not to be retained. Ibid., 252-253. This writer disagrees with Poston's conclusions. Poston is making a universal application from Deuteronomy 12:1-4 that cannot apply universally. For instance, verse two states that places where idolatry was practiced included mountaintops, hilltops, and under green trees. A literal application would forbid Christians from worshipping in these same places. Clearly, these were some of Jesus' preferred places to worship and pray (Matt 14:23; 17:1-6; Luke 22:39-40). This writer sees Poston's universal application of this verse as a misinterpretation and misapplication. Instead, this writer sees these verses as dealing with the issue of idolatry and God's concern that Israel leave all remnants of idol worship behind. Paulien also disagrees with Poston, saying that "Poston seems to have oversimplified matters, perhaps out of ignorance of the archaeological evidence regarding Israelite worship." Paulien, 222.

⁹⁰Paulien, 223.

the names of pagan gods were frequently used in Scripture as a vehicle through which a distinctively biblical description of the true God is given.⁹¹ The guiding principle is that when forms or words from another religion are retained, they must be biblically acceptable forms, and they must be used only as vehicles to convey a distinctively biblical view, or syncretism will result.⁹²

Part of the problem with syncretism is that the boundaries between syncretism and contextualization are not always clear. This is because the boundaries are changeable, depending on the circumstances.⁹³ This is not to say that there are not limits to contextualization.⁹⁴ Moreau says,

⁹¹Paulien, 220. Flemming agrees, saying that Paul used the altar to the unknown god of Athens to describe the true God of the Bible. Flemming, 76.

⁹²Hesselgrave, 74-75. Flemming states that if scriptural truth becomes relative, it presents a major problem for contextualization. Flemming, 117. Poston agrees. Poston, "You Must Not Worship," 248. This writer also agrees.

⁹³Moreau, 51. This writer agrees. An example of how different circumstances can change what is considered syncretistic is the Jerusalem Council's prohibition on food offered to idols (Acts 15:29). However, Paul later lays down the principle that what matters is conscience. If a believer does not see an idol as a god, then eating food offered to idols does not carry the same religious meaning, and his or her conscience is clear to eat the food. On the other hand, if a believer still attaches the old religious definitions and meanings to the food offered to idols, then to eat that food would be syncretistic and harm the believer's spiritual walk. Paul agrees that it is the meaning, not the form, that guides whether a practice from a previous religion is acceptable to retain (1 Cor 8:4-13).

⁹⁴Poston, "You Must Not Worship," 244.

It seems clear from some of the scriptural examples that God does allow—or at least tolerates—some forms of “borrowing” of ideas from other religions (2 Kings 5:17-19). However, it is also clear that there are boundaries on what is allowed (Exod 23:23-33; Deut 18:10-14).⁹⁵

Although syncretism presents a major problem for global missions, appropriate forms of contextualization remain valid, relevant, and necessary for mission, despite the inherent risks.⁹⁶ The risks include the possibility of losing essential elements of the gospel message in translation.⁹⁷ The benefits are that the gospel becomes more culturally relevant, increasing the odds that some will be saved (1 Cor 9:22).⁹⁸ However, appropriate contextualization may not be easier or even more successful than less appropriate forms of mission.⁹⁹ As Flemming says, “The gospel, in some ways, is counter cultural to every culture.”¹⁰⁰ The gospel message must confront culture with

⁹⁵Moraueu, 64.

⁹⁶Parshall, *New Paths*, 52. Flemming describes contextualization as inherently risky, but the benefits outweigh the risks. Flemming, 298.

⁹⁷Hiebert, 31.

⁹⁸Van Rheenen, “Syncretism,” 5-6. Poston adds that the church doesn’t simply participate in contextualization because it is a better strategy, but because it is the church’s calling from God. Poston, “You Must Not Worship,” 244.

⁹⁹Hesselgrave, 85. Flemming says that as a result of Paul’s contextualized approach, there was a mix of responses, indicating that appropriate contextualization does not guarantee a positive reception to the gospel. Flemming, 71.

¹⁰⁰Flemming, 83.

the aim of changing worldviews.¹⁰¹ This must be done without sacrificing the normative truth of Scripture.¹⁰²

There are two ditches that can lead to syncretism: to ignore contextualization or to overly focus on it.¹⁰³ On the one hand, to ignore contextualization risks having people turn to other relevant sources to address their needs.¹⁰⁴ On the other hand, over-contextualization risks validating cultural or religious elements opposed to the gospel, which can lead to syncretism.¹⁰⁵ Syncretism can occur as either over-contextualization or under-contextualization.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰¹Hesselgrave, 85. Flemming adds that "Authentic evangelistic contextualization even at the risk of rejection, must ultimately bring people face to face with Christ crucified and risen." Flemming, 84.

¹⁰²Flemming, 311.

¹⁰³Hesselgrave, 82. Van Rheenen, "Syncretism," 7. Parshall argues that the point at which contextualization actually becomes syncretism is when the message of the gospel becomes distorted. Parshall, *New Paths*, 46. This writer agrees with Parshall but would expand his definition of syncretism to include any distortion, blending, or removal of the doctrines or unique identity of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in favor of another religion's teachings or religious identity.

¹⁰⁴Flemming, 303. Flemming gives the example of not contextualizing the Lordship of Christ over the fears and superstitions of people as an example of leading people to turn instead to other syncretistic practices to address their fears and superstitions. Flemming, 233.

¹⁰⁵Michael T. Cooper, 197. Moraueu sees overly emphasizing dreams in mission as an example of what could potentially become a form of syncretism. Moraueu, 57.

¹⁰⁶Michael T. Cooper, 224. Pierson adds that Catholicism fell into syncretism through over-contextualization, and Protestantism, in an effort to avoid the same mistake, ended up falling into syncretism through under-contextualization by importing Western culture with the gospel message. Pierson, 146. Paulien agrees, saying, "when the Bible is not clear, those who fear syncretism will avoid a practice, and those who fear under-contextualization will permit it." Paulien, 224.

In Adventist missions there are approaches which represent both ends of the spectrum. One approach embraces contextualization, while another remains skeptical of contextualized approaches.¹⁰⁷ The emphasis on either culture or Scripture usually determines how contextualization will be defined by either group.¹⁰⁸ However, the problem that both groups are in danger of is that if either culture or Scripture is ignored in mission, the end product will be syncretism.¹⁰⁹

Adventist mission seeks to avoid syncretism that is a result of over-contextualization (high-level syncretism) of culture.¹¹⁰ When culture takes preeminence, culture is used to *define* the gospel instead of being used to *convey* the gospel, so that the message, not the method, is contextualized.¹¹¹ In this case, truth is redefined as

¹⁰⁷Gerry Karst, "Kingdom and Church: Response to Robert Johnston's Paper," in *Faith Development in Context: Symposium Papers*, ed. Bruce L. Bauer (Berrien Springs, MI: Department of World Mission, Andrews University, 2005), 148.

¹⁰⁸Van Rheezen, "Syncretism," 3.

¹⁰⁹Paulien, 229.

¹¹⁰Van Rheezen, "Syncretism," 7. Rodriguez agrees, stating that "all true contextualization must be subject to biblical truth and bear results for God's kingdom." Rodriguez, 256.

¹¹¹Rodriguez, 253-254. Van Rheezen outlines two options taken in contextualization: The first option places the Bible as the priority for guiding contextualization, while the second option is to set culture as the primary guide. He says that "Evangelicals, who believe that God's revelation in Scripture is authoritative in life and ministry, view this second option as syncretistic." Van Rheezen, "Syncretism," 4.

experience rather than doctrine,¹¹² and the changing winds of culture become the standard and guide for mission and for scriptural understanding.¹¹³ As Van Rhenen says about high-level syncretism, "the goal is to find what God is already doing in the culture rather than to communicate God's eternal message within the cultural context."¹¹⁴

On the other side, Adventist missions which seek to avoid syncretism can drift into under-contextualization (low-level syncretism), which includes importing Western customs and culture as part of the conversion package.¹¹⁵ Fear of high-level syncretism should not cause a knee-jerk reaction that swings the mission practice into low-level syncretism.¹¹⁶ There should be a balanced approach that avoids both high- and low-level syncretism, conveying biblical truth in biblically appropriate indigenous forms that will be familiar to the recipient culture.¹¹⁷ Only a

¹¹²Dybdahl, "Doing Theology," 11.

¹¹³Van Rhenen, "Syncretism," 4.

¹¹⁴Ibid.

¹¹⁵Paulien, 233. Escobar, 106. Oksnevad agrees with Paulien, adding that many of Adventists, evangelistic tools begin from a Western perspective and should be rethought from a Muslim perspective. Oksnevad, 93. Paulien adds that the Pharisees engaged in low-level syncretism by requiring converts to accept their culture. Paulien, 226.

¹¹⁶Parshall, *New Paths*, 44.

¹¹⁷Pierson, 81.

balanced approach that includes appropriate contextualization can truly avoid syncretism in missions.

In conclusion, the precise line between syncretism and contextualization is difficult to draw, since that line can move based on the circumstances. In addition, syncretism is partly an unavoidable part of the human experience. However, either over-contextualization or under-contextualization holds the greatest risk for syncretism. Therefore, syncretism is best avoided through appropriate contextualization that remains faithful to the doctrines and practices outlined in Scripture and redeems culture in order to aid in the proclamation and reception of the gospel. Now that a biblical view of syncretism has been defined, it is important to look at the spectrum of contextualization among Muslims.

The Contextualization Spectrum

As missiologists have responded to the challenge of mission among Muslims through various contextualized approaches, the result has been the formation of various contextualized communities among Muslims.¹¹⁸ These communities each represent a different level of contextualization along a scale that ranges from C-1 to

¹¹⁸Travis, "The C1 to C6 Spectrum," 1.

C-6, while all maintaining faith in Christ.¹¹⁹ To illustrate this spectrum, a simple graph is displayed in Table 1.

According to Timothy Tennent, "Most mission workers today accept C-4 as the most appropriate form of contextualization."¹²⁰ This is a highly contextualized approach that allows Islamic forms in worship but remains faithful to the message of the Bible.¹²¹ One of the main biblical supports for C-4 mission is 1 Corinthians 9:19-23, "To the Jew I became a Jew. . . ."¹²² This verse is also used by some to support C-5 communities.¹²³

¹¹⁹Ibid. Travis is the one responsible for developing the C-1 to C-6 scale. His work has become a foundational element in the current debate regarding contextualization of the gospel among Muslims and is often cited by missiologists. It should be noted that "C-6 is more of a survival strategy than a contextualization model." Jim Leffel, "Contextualization: Building Bridges to the Muslim Community." <http://www.xenos.org/essays/contextualization-building-bridges-muslim-community/>; (accessed July 10, 2017).

¹²⁰Tennent, "The Hidden History," 2. Woodberry agrees. Woodberry, 145. Paulien indicates that some feel the line should be between C-2 and C-3, others see it between C-4 and C-5, while others see no lines at all. Paulien, 224. This writer is in alignment with the majority that C-4 is the limit for contextualization, with the realization that C-5 may be a natural stage that a Muslim who is undergoing conversion may pass through for a time. The goal, however, must be not to leave Muslims at C-5 but continually move them towards C-4 or even C-3 identities. See Appendix A for a clearer delineation of where C-5 branches into syncretism.

¹²¹Woodberry, 144.

¹²²Paulien, 240.

¹²³Roennfeldt, 38. Paulien disagrees, saying that this verse can only support C-4 and does not support Muslims remaining in the mosque. Paulien, 240. This writer agrees with Paulien, seeing that Paul did not incarnate into the religion of the Gentiles, only into their culture.

TABLE 1
THE C1-C6 SPECTRUM

	C-1	C-2	C-3	C-4	C-5	C-6
Christ-Centered Community Description	A church foreign to the Muslim community in both culture and language	C-1 in form but speaking the language used by Muslims, though their religious terminology is distinctively non-Muslim	C-2 using non-Islamic cultural elements (e.g., dress, music, diet, arts)	C-3 with some biblically acceptable Islamic practices	C-4 with a "Muslim follower of Jesus" self-identity	Secret believers, may or may not be active members in the religious life of the Muslim community
Self-Identity	Christian	Christian	Christian	Follower of Isa [Jesus]	Muslim follower of Jesus	Privately: Christian or follower of Isa, or Muslim follower of Jesus
Muslim Perception	Christian	Christian	Christian	A kind of Christian	A strange kind of Muslim	Muslim

Source: Joshua Massey, "God's Amazing Diversity in Drawing Muslims to Christ," *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 17:1 (Spring 2000): 5-12.

C-5 is an insider movement that leads Muslims to accept Jesus while remaining in Islam.¹²⁴ Those that support C-5 view insider movements as authentic spiritual movements

¹²⁴Woodberry, 147. Hesselgrave agrees, adding that C-5 was not meant to be a description of a mission strategy, but simply the description of a group that exists in Islam. Hesselgrave, 83.

towards Christ.¹²⁵ In support of this, some cite that although Jews did not accept Jesus as the Messiah and early Christians continued to identify as Jews, thus Muslims should be allowed to grow in Christ while continuing to identify as Muslims.¹²⁶ Others consider C-5 missions as leading towards syncretism.¹²⁷ As Hesselgrave says, "Islamic

¹²⁵Hesselgrave, 84. Roennfeldt sees C-5 as a valid path that could lead to a great number coming to Christ. Roennfeldt, 35. Whitehouse sees C-5 as a necessary form of evangelism to Muslims in some areas of the world. Jerald Whitehouse, "Issues of Identity," *Faith Development in Context*, Bruce Bauer, ed. (Berrien Springs, MI: Department of World Mission, Andrews University, 2005), 127. Dybdahl agrees with Whitehouse. Dybdahl, "Doing Theology," 15. Travis agrees, from a non-Adventist Christian perspective, on the necessity of a C-5 witness. Travis, "Messianic Muslim," 53-59. Parshall says "yes to C-5 as a starting point, but always with a laser beam focus on going down the scale to C-4 within an appropriate timeframe." Phil Parshall, "Four Responses to Tennent," *International Journal of Frontier Missions*, Vol. 23, no. 3 (Fall 2006): 125. Martin agrees with Parshall. Carlos Martin, "C-5 Muslims, C-5 Missionaries, or C-5 Strategies," in *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 17, no. 2 (Autumn 2006): 133. This writer agrees with the conclusion of Parshall that some Muslims will transition through C-5 as they accept the gospel, but C-5 should not be an end goal simply because it is the most effective strategy. Biblical doctrines and a remnant identity should not be sacrificed for numbers.

¹²⁶Woodberry, 147. This writer disagrees, seeing evidence that the New Testament church made conscious steps to separate from the Jewish religious structure. They had their own leadership structure (Acts 1:26; 2:42; 6:3-7). Tithes and offerings went to support the mission effort and structure of the new church (Acts 4:34-35; 2 Cor 9:5-7). Believers met together apart from the synagogue in house churches (Acts 2:46). They even had a separate name for their group, entitled "The Way" (Acts 9:2). Those who joined the New Testament church, even if they were from a Jewish background, were baptized as members of this church (Acts 2:41). See also Appendix A for a more thorough discussion regarding why Muslims remaining in Islam as part of contextualization is not an appropriate strategy.

¹²⁷Martin, *An Adventist Theology*, 301. Parshall agrees with Martin, naming C-5 strategies as a form of syncretism. Parshall, "Danger!" 405. Tennent also agrees, seeing it as problematic as C-1 extractionism. Tennent, "Followers of Jesus," 103. Williams echoes Tennent's thoughts. Williams, 346. This writer concurs with these conclusions.

messianism (C5) not only runs the risk of syncretism, it may be syncretistic already."¹²⁸ Thus, "the current debate has largely centered on C-5 believers."¹²⁹

Some Adventists have actively engaged in missional strategies to develop insider movements within Islam that resemble C-5 communities.¹³⁰ This form of Adventist ministry is known as Faith Development in Context (FDIC) and supports the development of both C-4 and C-5 communities.¹³¹ Although FDIC does have some distinctive differences to the average C-5 community, the end goal of creating a reformed movement within Islam remains the same.¹³² FDIC and C-5 communities also share the same missiological advantages and disadvantages. The advantages include a culturally relevant faith, a more gradual progression of faith, and an increased potential for sharing faith within Islam.¹³³ The

¹²⁸Hesselgrave, 85. Poston agrees, saying that C-5 "is syncretistic in its very essence." Poston, "You Must Not Worship," 252. This writer agrees.

¹²⁹Tennent, "The Hidden History," 2. Woodberry agrees. Woodberry, 145. See Appendix A for a critical evaluation of Seventh-day Adventist C-5 strategies among Muslims.

¹³⁰Bauer, "Maintaining Unity," 260.

¹³¹Whitehouse, "Issues of Identity," 127.

¹³²Ibid., 113. FDIC is different from C-5 in that it identifies itself as an end-time movement, it has additional meetings and leadership outside the mosque, it accepts some Adventist doctrines such as the Sabbath, and it rejects animistic practices within Islam. Ibid., 126.

¹³³Woodberry, 150.

disadvantages are that Islamic and Christian beliefs and practices have a greater potential to blend into syncretism, and the insider movement is almost entirely disconnected from fellowship with the world Church.¹³⁴ A critique of FDIC and C-5 strategies is given in Appendix A. Included in this critique is the use of Allah for God, whether it is appropriate to use the Qur'an in Muslim evangelism, the retention of the *Shahada*, *Salah* prayers, mosque attendance, and an Islamic identity, as well as the establishment of parallel structures in Muslim evangelism.

In conclusion, Adventists must be careful that contextualization does not embrace so much of Islam that biblical doctrines and a Seventh-day Adventist identity are compromised. The gospel should grow within Islamic culture, but it becomes syncretistic when it takes permanent root within the Islamic religion. C-4-type missions represent the extent to which any Adventist mission can take place, and all strategies should preserve intact the biblical mission, message, and identity of the Church. Now that the spectrum of contextualization among Muslims has been considered, the writings of Ellen White on contextualization will also be considered.

¹³⁴Ibid. See Appendix A for a more complete description of how Faith Development in Context is an inappropriate model for contextualized approaches to Muslim evangelism.

Ellen White on Contextualization

Ellen G. White's position on contextualization issues is especially important from an Adventist perspective, since her writings hold an important place for Seventh-day Adventists. White held a view that the gospel message must transcend culture. She states that "Christ recognized no distinction of nationality or rank or creed. . . . But Christ came to break down every wall of partition."¹³⁵ Therefore, the church is "not to wait for the people to come to them";¹³⁶ instead, "from city to city, and from country to country, they are to carry the publications containing the promise of the Saviour's soon coming."¹³⁷ This does not mean that White sees the work of Adventists as confined to foreign missions. She clarifies that "in every large city of America there are people of different nationalities, who must hear the message for this time."¹³⁸

As missionaries seek to contextualize the gospel at home and abroad, White believes that before the missionary arrives, God is already at work in every nation and culture. She says, "although in the depths of heathenism,

¹³⁵White, *Ministry of Healing*, 25.

¹³⁶Ellen G. White, *Acts of the Apostles* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2005), 28.

¹³⁷Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing, 1946), 578.

¹³⁸*Ibid.*, 572.

with no knowledge of the written law of God nor of His Son Jesus, they have revealed in manifold ways the working of a divine power on mind and character."¹³⁹ This does not mean that other cultures and religions are somehow validated by God's presence and work among the heathen. Instead, White clarifies that "no error is truth, or can be made truth by repetition, or by faith in it . . . sincerity in a false religion will never save a man."¹⁴⁰

For White an authentic religious experience includes membership in the remnant Church. She states, "The Redeemer of the world does not sanction experience and exercise in religious matters independent of His organized and acknowledged church, where He has a church."¹⁴¹ Instead, church membership is a non-negotiable where there is a church. White says, "Bring the requirements of the gospel to bear upon the candidates for baptism."¹⁴² This shows her emphasis on biblical doctrines and baptism as non-negotiable for church membership. Therefore, any contextualization strategies must include biblical doctrines and membership through baptism, which avoids establishing an alternate religious organization or church

¹³⁹White, *Desire of Ages*, 638.

¹⁴⁰White, *Selected Messages*, 2:56.

¹⁴¹White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 3:432.

¹⁴²*Ibid.*, 6:95.

structure. White says, "We cannot now enter into any new organization; for this would mean apostasy from the truth."¹⁴³

A holistic mission, according to White, would also include seeking to meet the needs of society. She points particularly to health ministry "as a means of overcoming prejudice and gaining access to minds."¹⁴⁴ But meeting social needs was never to become the final goal of mission. Reaching felt needs was ultimately to "find an open avenue to the heart, where you may plant the good seed of virtue and religion."¹⁴⁵

White also recognized the need to adapt the gospel message into various languages and even within various cultures. She states that "the truth is to be translated into many languages, that all nations may enjoy its pure, life-giving influence."¹⁴⁶ But the gospel proclamation must not stop with linguistic translation—it must reach to the heart of society. In support of incarnation, White says, "As His representatives among men, God does not choose angels who have never fallen, but human beings, men of like

¹⁴³White, *Selected Messages*, 2:390.

¹⁴⁴White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 9:211.

¹⁴⁵Ibid., 4:226.

¹⁴⁶Ellen G. White, "The Foreigners in America," *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* 91, no. 45, 29 October 1914, 4.

passions with those they seek to save."¹⁴⁷ She encourages workers "to come close to the people, sit with them at their tables, and lodge in their humble homes."¹⁴⁸ White even shares the importance of having indigenous workers carry the gospel to their own culture and people.¹⁴⁹

When the gospel is carried to a non-Christian context, the distinctive doctrines should not at first be preached. Instead, White suggests implementing Paul's method of starting with the beliefs of the audience and gradually building on those beliefs.¹⁵⁰ Then, as prejudice is broken down, we can unfold "to them the great truths of the kingdom."¹⁵¹

This is part of what White sees as learning "to adapt our labors to the condition of the people—to meet men where they are."¹⁵² This adaptability is crucial, because White sees prejudice as a hinderance to the acceptance of the truth.¹⁵³ She emphasizes that Christians must "agree with

¹⁴⁷White, *Acts of the Apostles*, 134.

¹⁴⁸Ellen G. White, *Historical Sketches of the Foreign Missions of the Seventh-day Adventists* (Basel, Switzerland: Imprimerie Polyglotte, 1886), 148.

¹⁴⁹White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 9:202, 208. White, *Evangelism*, 570

¹⁵⁰White, *Evangelism*, 141.

¹⁵¹Ibid., 484.

¹⁵²Ibid.

¹⁵³White, *Historical Sketches*, 122.

people on every point where you can consistently do so. Let them see that you love their souls, and want to be in harmony with them so far as possible."¹⁵⁴

For White, accommodation is a necessity, but accommodation also has limits. White says,

There is constant danger that professing Christians will come to think that in order to have influence with worldlings, they must to a certain extent conform to the world. But though such a course may appear to afford great advantages, it always ends in spiritual loss.¹⁵⁵

Conversion can only go one way. Syncretism is a real danger that must be avoided by the Church. Although accommodation to culture is necessary to some degree, the distinctive doctrines must not be lost or diluted. As White says, "The waymarks which have made us what we are, are to be preserved. . . . He calls upon us to hold firmly, with the grip of faith, to the fundamental principles that are based upon unquestionable authority."¹⁵⁶ Ultimately, if the Bible is taken as the absolute standard, "the great principles of Bible truth bring all into perfect harmony."¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁴White, *Evangelism*, 140.

¹⁵⁵Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1917), 570.

¹⁵⁶Ellen G. White, *Counsels to Writers and Editors* (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Association, 1946), 52.

¹⁵⁷Ellen G. White, "The Swiss Conference and The European Council," *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* 62, no. 43, 3 November 1885, 673.

In conclusion, contextualization is a biblical strategy used by Jesus, the Apostle Paul, and the New Testament church and is supported by the writings of Ellen G. White. Biblical contextualization includes sharing the gospel across cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and geographic barriers, while remaining inclusive to other cultures. Biblical contextualization allows for incarnation, for the use of pagan words, and even for non-biblical sources to convey the message of the gospel. However, biblical contextualization will avoid the syncretistic mixing of religious beliefs or identities that are not in harmony with Scripture. In particular, the doctrines of the Church and a single remnant church identity must remain unaltered through any contextualization process. In addition, biblical contextualization will avoid both high-level and low-level forms of contextualization in order to avoid syncretism.

**SYNTHESIS OF AN APPROPRIATE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST APPROACH
TO CONTEXTUALIZATION AMONG MUSLIMS IN AMERICA**

The synthesis of an appropriate contextualized approach for Muslims must follow the methods of Jesus Christ, since He is the supreme model for contextualization. The contextualization method modeled by Christ is outlined by White, who said,

Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Saviour mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, "Follow Me."¹

Thus, the Savior's key to success was reaching people where they were and gradually leading them as He won more and more of their confidence and trust. Similarly, a contextualized approach to Muslims that follows this pattern allows Muslims to go through a gradual transition period, where they progressively move from an Islamic theology and identity to a Seventh-day Adventist theology and identity.² As a model for how this transition could take place is outlined in this chapter, it is important to note that some of the ideas presented are common sense, while

¹White, *Ministry of Healing*, 143.

²Travis, "Messianic Muslim," 53. Paulien agrees. Paulien, 224. Parshall also sees the need for a gradual transition. Parshall, "Four Responses to Tennent," 125. Martin also agrees. Martin, "C-5 Muslims," 133.

others are my own original thoughts based on principles derived from previous chapters, and still others are derived from specific authors which are clearly noted.

It is also important to note that the gradual nature of the model suggested in this chapter necessitates that Muslims retain Islamic beliefs and practices for a time while they are transitioning towards an Adventist theology and identity.³ This transitional period is a natural part of the process of conversion. Biblically acceptable Islamic forms and practices described in Appendix A, such as the use of Allah in reference to God, modified forms of Islamic group prayers, the use of a modified *Shahada*, as well as a culturally sensitive style and form of worship in a Christian mosque are adopted during this transition towards a new Adventist theology and identity. In addition, specific efforts are made throughout the transition to win the confidence and trust of Muslims.

The writer here suggests ten major steps in the synthesis of an appropriate Seventh-day Adventist approach to contextualization among Muslims. These steps include working towards building trust by breaking down mutual barriers of misperception which exist in the Adventist and Muslim communities. The ten steps then transition towards building relationships that can lead to personal Bible studies. Those Bible studies will feed into small groups

³Paulien, 224.

which will prepare a Muslim convert for a Seventh-day Adventist ethnic fellowship. The steps culminate with the acceptance of Seventh-day Adventist doctrines, a Seventh-day Adventist identity, and discipleship training for reaching other Muslims.

Step 1: New Perceptions

The first step is to begin influencing a change in the views of Seventh-day Adventists towards Muslim evangelism in North America. Negative stereotypical views that frame Muslims as the ultimate enemy will do little to foster the type of outreach needed to reach Muslims.⁴ Americans, in general, tend to have a negative view of Islam, and any negative comments about Islam will only push Muslims further away.⁵ Christians need to replace their own defensive attitudes with attitudes of love and openness towards Muslims.⁶ What will win Muslim hearts are not arguments but a genuine display of true Christian love.⁷

⁴I recently heard from an elder in a Seventh-day Adventist church that Muslims are an unreachable group of people and that Seventh-day Adventists should have nothing to do with them. This type of thinking is not only present within Adventism, but threatens to undermine the mission of the Adventist Church to join God's mission to save Muslims.

⁵Poston, "The Current State of Islam," 3-4.

⁶AbDat-Isa, 38.

⁷Wilford Darden, "Muslim Background Believers in North America: African American MBB's," in *Faith Development in Context*, ed. Bruce Bauer (Berrien Springs, MI: Department of World Mission, Andrews University, 2005), 85. Parshall agrees. Parshall, *New Paths*, 187. Stewart does not find picking out the flaws in Islam an effective strategy for winning Muslims. Ashton Stewart Jr., "Models for Ethnic Ministries: The Keys to the Iranian Heart," in *The Gospel for Islam*,

As new perceptions which see Muslims as people who need the gospel replace the old perceptions and stereotypes, Adventists will become more open to reaching out to Muslims. A willingness to leave the comforts of the church, the office, and the home and to work among Muslims is the first step in any appropriate contextualized approach for Muslims. Seventh-day Adventists should follow the New Testament command of Jesus to cross all barriers necessary to bring the gospel to all people (Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 1:8), including the millions of Muslims within North America.

Not only is there a need for Adventist perceptions to change, but there is also a need for Muslim perceptions to change. One powerful way to change their perceptions and witness to Muslims in North America is to demonstrate a righteous and godly personal life.⁸ To some extent, an immigrant's decision as to whether or not to remain Muslim in the United States will be influenced by his or her interactions with and perceptions of non-Muslims in the United States.⁹ This form of passive witnessing may help

eds. Roy Oksnevad and Dotsey Welliver (Wheaton, IL: Evangelism and Missions Information Service, 2001), 147.

⁸Janet Metzger, "Muslim Women in North America," in *The Gospel for Islam*, eds. Roy Oksnevad and Dotsey Welliver (Wheaton, IL: Evangelism and Missions Information Service, 2001), 52. Poston and Roennfeldt both agree. Poston, "The Current State of Islam," 17. Roennfeldt, 39.

⁹Poston, "The Current State of Islam," 11.

undo inaccurate perceptions¹⁰ and win the confidence of Muslims, preparing them for receiving the distinctives of Adventism.¹¹

Before the second step is considered, it is important to emphasize the diversity that exists within the Muslim population in North America. First-generation Muslim immigrants will typically require a contextualized approach similar to one used by missionaries overseas. They require a worker who speaks their language and is comfortable adopting Islamic culture and dress to work with them. Second- and third-generation Muslims have typically adopted the language, culture, and dress of North America and require a less contextualized approach. Therefore, either indigenous Seventh-day Adventist workers or trained Seventh-day Adventist missionaries who speak the language and have adopted a culturally Islamic way of life, can be hired by a local conference, a union conference, or even a division to work for first-generation Muslim immigrants within the United States. It would be more appropriate for trained lay members and pastors to focus their efforts on

¹⁰Metzger, 53. Paulien agrees and cites 2 Timothy 2:24-26 as support for passive witnessing. Paulien, 241.

¹¹Fausto Edgar Nuñez, "Introducing Adventist Distinctives in New Fields: A Literary and Historical Analysis of Selected Counsels By Ellen G. White," in *Faith Development in Context: Symposium Papers*, ed. Bruce L. Bauer (Berrien Springs, MI: Department of World Mission, Andrews University, 2005) 71.

second- and third-generation Muslims who speak their language and are adapted to North American culture.

Step 2: Meeting Them Where They Are

The second major step is to establish contact with Muslims. Following Jesus' model of going to where the people are, Adventist missionaries could begin by learning to cook the foods of various Muslim cultures, which would necessitate visiting markets where Muslim immigrants shop. Visiting a mosque on Friday is another method to establish contact with Muslims. A third option is to visit functions set up by Muslim associations on public university campuses. If an Adventist can establish a friendship with one Muslim, it will be easier to tap into that Muslim's network of friends and likely establish contact with other Muslims. The goal in this step is to connect with Muslims in order to break down barriers and develop a friendship that will eventually lead towards personal Bible studies.¹²

Authentic mission and genuine friendship require a concern for the social issues faced by Muslims in North America.¹³ It is this genuine concern for the needs of people that can open doors for them to consider

¹²The reason for personal Bible studies, rather than a public evangelistic series, is that Muslims are more likely to make decisions in a private setting.

¹³Metzger, 49. McGavran sees social issues being met as a result of authentic mission. McGavran, "What is Mission?" 28-29. Glasser also adds that God is concerned for social issues and social justice. Glasser, 35.

Christianity.¹⁴ Parshall says, "An effective presentation of the message of Jesus Christ must be based on an appeal to felt needs that pervade a Muslim's total life and thought."¹⁵ These felt needs range from ministering to the hurts and pains of life to providing practical life classes.¹⁶ Offering seminars, classes, or developing programs that reach the felt needs of Muslim immigrants in the United States provides other valid points of contact through which a friendship with a Muslim can begin.

As important as social issues are, though, a concern for the salvation of souls must always be the primary objective.¹⁷ The gospel cannot be defined as salvation from social ills, but must remain concerned with the salvation of souls from sin.¹⁸ A holistic evangelism will be concerned

¹⁴Jim and Joyce Neergaard, "Adventist Development and Relief Agency: A Bridge to Islam," in *The Three Angels and the Crescent*. eds. Jonquil Hole and Borge Schantz (Bracknell, Berkshire, England: SDA Global Centre for Islamic Studies, 1993), 95-107. Bernard-Channer agrees. Valerie Bernard-Channer, "Women in Islam," in *The Three Angels and the Crescent*. eds. Jonquil Hole and Borge Schantz (Bracknell, Berkshire, England: SDA Global Centre for Islamic Studies, 1993), 51.

¹⁵Parshall, *New Paths*, 65. McIver agrees with Parshall, saying that often evangelism is concerned more with numbers than the real needs of people. Robert McIver, "Relating to Muslims: An Adventist View," *Ministry Magazine* (October 2001), 18. <https://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/2001/10/relating-to-muslims-an-adventist-view.html> (accessed June 1, 2017).

¹⁶Metzger, 51-52. English as a Second Language is an especially helpful class to new immigrants and can be an effective bridge to witness. *Ibid.*, 49.

¹⁷McGavran, "What is Mission?" 28.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, "New Mission," 52. Van Engen agrees. Van Engen, 74.

with both the physical and spiritual person, but the spiritual will always take preeminence in mission.¹⁹

In addition, Muslims tend to be suspicious that social outreach programs have the objective of conversion.²⁰ It may be helpful, then, to win their trust by waiting for Muslims to ask theological questions before evangelizing them.²¹ God can provide natural moments when sharing the gospel with a Muslim immigrant is not threatening.²² Ultimately, our contact with Muslims should lead towards a friendship that transitions into Bible studies.²³

Step 3: Breaking Down Initial Barriers

The third major step is to work to break down any initial barriers that might prohibit a friendship from forming. Since a Christian identity can pose as a major barrier, it would be better to identify oneself as an Adventist. Likely, a Muslim will not know what an Adventist is. It can be explained that Adventists do not eat pork or

¹⁹McGavran, "New Mission," 67.

²⁰Parshall, *New Paths*, 183.

²¹Metzger, 50. Darden agrees. Darden, 85.

²²Metzger, 49. These moments will usually occur in a private, not a public, setting.

²³*Ibid.*, 57. Philip agrees, saying that Muslims who came to Christ while students in the United States were most influenced through the godly lives they witnessed in Christians and through studying the Bible. David Philip, "Models of Ethnic Ministries: International Students," in *The Gospel for Islam*, eds. Roy Oksnevad and Dotsey Welliver (Wheaton, IL: Evangelism and Mission Information Service, 2001), 81.

drink alcohol, just like Muslims. Adventists believe in serving the one true God of Abraham and living pure and holy lives, and they also anticipate the coming of Jesus to the world.

In following this third step, the main principle of contextualization is to focus on areas of agreement in order to break down prejudice. It is also helpful for men to approach only men, and women to approach only women. Since modesty is a major concern in Islam, women should wear modest clothing that covers their arms and legs. It would also be helpful to use Islamic terminology in reference to spiritual topics. Prayer can be referred to as *Salah* or *du'a*. Jesus can be referred to as *Isa*. The first five books of the Bible can be referred to as *al-Tawrat*. The Psalms can be referred to as *al-Zabor*. The Gospels can be referred to as *al-Injil*. Satan can be referred to as *al-Shaytan*, and, finally, God can be referred to as the more familiar Islamic term Allah.

Mission is ultimately God's enterprise, and success in reaching Muslims can only occur with His guidance and through His power.²⁴ Prayer, then, must take a central role in all mission strategies and should become a focus in this step.²⁵ For many Muslims, it was God directly revealing

²⁴Parshall, *New Paths*, 242.

²⁵Ibid., 246. Metzger sees prayer as an effective strategy for reaching Somali Muslim immigrants. Metzger, 52.

Christ through dreams that led to their conversion.²⁶ Experiencing God's healing in answer to prayer is also powerful for Muslims.²⁷ Therefore, strategies to Muslim immigrants should include asking God to reveal Himself to Muslims through dreams,²⁸ as well as praying for healing.²⁹

Step 4: Friendship Evangelism

The fourth major step is to work towards building a friendship through shared interests. Muslims enjoy many of the same activities that others enjoy, such as cooking, outdoor activities, shopping, and family activities. Another way that a friendship can be built is around a specific need that may be present in a Muslim's life. Whether it is through a shared interest or meeting a need, the initial meeting must lead towards a future meeting where the relationship can progress towards friendship.

Evangelistic efforts towards Muslims in the United States should attempt to incarnate into their life, their

²⁶Stewart, 149. Parshall agrees. Parshall, *New Paths*, 152. Dybdahl also agrees, adding that God communicated to non-believers through dreams throughout the Bible. Jon L. Dybdahl, "Dreams in Muslim Mission," in *The Three Angels and the Crescent: A Reader*, eds. Jonquil Hole and Borge Schantz (Newbold College, Backnell, Berkshire, England: SDA Global Centre for Islamic Studies, 1993), 138.

²⁷Parshall, *New Paths*, 154.

²⁸Dybdahl, "Dreams in Muslim Mission," 140.

²⁹Parshall, *New Paths*, 154.

culture and customs.³⁰ Learning to enjoy their food,³¹ to speak their language,³² to appreciate their view of time,³³ and even to live in their community can all be a powerful incarnational witness to Muslims.³⁴ Incarnation is so important, because building friendships with Muslims is the most important and effective form of evangelism used to reach Muslim immigrants.³⁵ This is because practical relationships are more important than simple theory in conversion.³⁶ Pierson says that "Dr. Woodberry has done research on seven hundred people who have been converted from Islam to Christ. In every one, friendship played an essential role."³⁷

³⁰Ibid., 104.

³¹Ibid., 113.

³²Ibid., 105. Metzger, 51.

³³Parshall, *New Paths*, 108.

³⁴Ibid., 111.

³⁵Richard P. Bailey, "The Call to the Church in North America," in *The Gospel for Islam*, eds. Roy Oksnevad and Dotsey Welliver (Wheaton, IL: Evangelism and Missions Information Service, 2001), 192. Philip says that personal evangelism is far more effective than public evangelism for Muslims in North America. Philip, 137. Darden also agrees, adding that friendship, combined with a positive Christian lifestyle, is very effective in Muslim evangelism. Darden, 85-86. Metzger also agree. Metzger, 51.

³⁶Gottfried Oosterwal, "The Use of the Qur'an in Sharing the Gospel, Promise or Compromise: Response to Ganoune Diop," in *Faith Development in Context: Symposium Papers*, ed. Bruce L. Bauer (Berrien Springs, MI: Department of World Mission, Andrews University, 2005), 181.

³⁷Pierson, 333.

As the friendship progresses, it is important that the Muslims be shown an example that is totally different from the typical Muslim view of Christians. They should identify their new Adventist friends as moral, devoted to God, concerned about kosher foods, having strong family ties, and holding an accepting view of Muslims. As trust begins to build, Adventist missionaries should begin to take an interest in the spiritual life of their Muslim friends. They should look for ways to turn their conversations with their Muslim friends towards spiritual themes and look for opportunities to begin meetings with the purpose of discussing spiritual topics.

Step 5: Qur'anic Studies

The fifth step is to transition into spiritual studies. These initial studies should be as neutral as possible and should begin with Muslim sources of authority and general areas of agreement.³⁸ Presenting the Adventist distinctive doctrines too quickly only brings confusion and raises barriers.³⁹ Beginning with the Qur'an, together with cultural elements and finding bridges to biblical themes, has been an effective method used in mission.⁴⁰

³⁸Paulien, 240. Nuñez agrees, saying that Christ's method was to start with the known and gradually move towards the unknown. Nuñez, 75.

³⁹Nuñez, 68.

⁴⁰Oosterwal, 182. Oksnevad agrees that using culture is an effective bridge to Bible study. Oksnevad, 91. Accad also agrees. Accad, 53.

I suggest that the studies begin by covering the evidence for the existence of God, a truth held in both the Qur'an and the Bible. This study should begin with passages from the Qur'an that talk about Allah as the Creator. Evidence from science for the existence of Allah should be covered to validate the message of the Qur'an that there is a God. At the end of this first study, an introduction to biblical passages that proclaim the existence of God should also be shared. At this point in the study, it is assumed that Allah and God are the same; however, at a later point a Bible study revealing the true God of the Bible is given.

The next spiritual study should again begin with the Qur'an by looking at what it says about Creation.⁴¹ Then apologetic evidence for the creation of life on earth from science should be studied to once again confirm the message of the Qur'an that life was created by God. As in the previous study, biblical passages that also confirm that life was created by God should be considered at the end of the spiritual discussion. Since science is used to validate qur'anic theology, and the Bible is simply used as a supportive document at the end of the initial studies, a Muslim's resistance to such studies should be low.

These spiritual studies should then address the views in the Qur'an that *al-Tawrat* (Torah), *al-Zabur* (Psalms),

⁴¹Oksnevad suggests starting with the story of Creation, since this is an area of high agreement between Adventists and Muslims. Oksnevad, 94-95.

and *al-Injil* (Gospels) were originally messages from God. Since Muslims universally believe that the Bible is corrupted,⁴² it is helpful to point to places in the Qur'an which support the Torah, the Psalms, and the Gospels.⁴³ Having Bibles in Arabic would also help build credibility with Arabic-speaking Muslims, since they hold that the Arabic version of the Qur'an is the literal word of God.⁴⁴ Once it is seen that the Qur'an is supportive of the Bible, the spiritual studies can move towards a study of the prophets of the Qur'an that are also mentioned in the Bible. Gradually, the use of the Bible should increase as the studies progress.

Once the Bible and Qur'an have been used to study topics on which they both agree, the major question of whether the Bible is really corrupted should be raised. To address this question, the Adventist missionary should suggest transitioning into several studies that consider archaeology and the Bible. Modern archaeological discoveries reveal that the Bible is historically reliable. This leads to the next question, which is whether there is

⁴²Parshall, *New Paths*, 132. Oksnevad, 90.

⁴³Roennfeldt, 40.

⁴⁴Parshall, *New Paths*, 133. In agreement, Pierson adds that Muslims have embraced a New Testament which uses Islamic words and has a qur'anic look. Pierson, 170.

evidence that supports the Bible as an authentic message from Allah.

To address the divine inspiration of the Bible, the spiritual studies should turn towards the prophecy of Daniel 2, which reveals a prophetic dream. Dreams are highly significant in Islamic culture as acceptable forms of divine guidance, so there should be an instant connection with the Muslim culture. Once Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream reveals God's involvement in revealing the future through the Bible, the Bible will begin to have credibility as inspired by Allah. The next major prophecy that can be covered is the prophecy of *Isa* (Jesus) concerning His Second Coming in Matthew 24. Since Muslims believe both in the Second Coming and the signs that will occur prior to His coming, the fulfillment of the Matthew 24 prophecy should reveal that the New Testament is also a trustworthy message inspired by Allah.

Step 6: Bible Studies

The sixth step is to transition into exclusive Bible studies. The Muslim should be asked if he or she would like to know more about the message of Allah in the Bible. At this point, the Bible is taken as the prime source for studies. Bible studies should begin with *al-Tawrat* (Torah) and gradually move towards *al-Injil* (Gospels). The Great Controversy theme is a theme that resonates with Muslims and should be covered as the initial Bible study. Next, the

importance of God's law and the results of breaking God's law should be covered. This will naturally lead into a study on the human dilemma of being powerless to reach God's standard in our own strength.

Once a Muslim reaches this point in the Bible studies, the Adventist missionary should carefully reveal that there is no assurance of salvation in Islam. This lack of assurance, combined with the revelation of humanity's powerlessness of being able to reach God's standard on his or her own, should lead a Muslim to view his or her position as utterly hopeless without divine intervention. This is a crucial point, where a Muslim must long for the assurance of salvation. At this point a transition into a study on God's plan of salvation through *Isa* (Jesus) should be made.

The plan of salvation should be studied from the perspective of God's power over human weakness. The Great Controversy theme is especially critical during this study. God's promise of deliverance and trust in Him should be emphasized. The sanctuary system should be revealed as God's pattern for salvation. The Messiah should be revealed as God's promised Deliverer in both the Bible and the Qur'an and as the fulfillment of the sanctuary pattern.

A particularly effective strategy in conveying the gospel to Muslim minds is using the theme of Christ's

victory in Scripture.⁴⁵ In this model the great need for Christ is presented as the longing of every soul for victory over what is bad inside us.⁴⁶ This Great Controversy narrative, which is at the heart of Adventist theology, resonates deeply with Muslim's minds.⁴⁷ As a Muslim sees *Isa* (Jesus) as *al-Masih* (the Messiah) of prophecy, a special emphasis should be placed on *Isa's* (Jesus') power over *al-Shaytan* (Satan),⁴⁸ power over the *jinn*⁴⁹ and demons,⁵⁰ power over evil in humanity, and ultimately power over the grave.⁵¹ This emphasis on Christ's victory allows the cross and the resurrection to be viewed in terms of victory rather than shame. Acceptance of the plan of salvation represents a major milestone for Muslims, because at this point he or she is beginning to transition from qur'anic theology to a biblically Adventist theology.

The Adventist missionary at this point should encourage the Muslim towards placing his or her faith in *Isa* (Jesus) and studying His teachings from *al-Injil* (the

⁴⁵Oksnevad, 91.

⁴⁶Ibid., 97.

⁴⁷Ibid., 98-99.

⁴⁸Ibid., 105.

⁴⁹The *jinn* are demonic spirits that are inferior to angels. Schantz, *Islam in the Post 9/11 World*, 73.

⁵⁰Oksnevad, 101.

⁵¹Ibid., 99.

Gospels). A copy of the Gospel of Mark should be given to this Muslim friend for him or her to read and study on their own. Muslims should learn that through the power of *Isa* (Jesus), all believers are empowered to keep God's law. This should lead into a study of the Sabbath and its special place as the eternal memorial of Creation. Once the Sabbath has been accepted by the Muslim, he or she is ready to transition into a home fellowship.

Step 7: Contextualized Home Groups

The seventh step is gender-specific home fellowships, where Islamic forms of worship are practiced in biblically appropriate ways.⁵² These home fellowships function as a Muslim outreach and are organized as branch Sabbath Schools of a local Seventh-day Adventist ethnic fellowship. The purpose of the home fellowship is to immediately provide a Muslim with a place to worship God on the Sabbath, while providing an alternative to the mosque. A traditional Seventh-day Adventist church presents too many offensive and foreign elements for a Sabbath-keeping Muslim to attend. Instead, the home fellowship should have an open room or space where prayers can be made, where attendees can sit on the floor, and where a biblical message sensitive to Muslim believers is given. There are no

⁵²The ideas for home groups were derived first from the Bible (Acts 2:46). White mentions small groups as a plan revealed to her from heaven. White, *Evangelism*, 115. Small groups are also a well-known strategy for church growth inside and out of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

musical instruments, hymnbooks, or distinctive Christian emblems displayed, so a Muslim should not feel threatened or offended in any way.

The prayers in a home fellowship follow a modified form of the *Salah* prayers held in the mosque. All participants face the same direction towards the front of the room. All participants prostrate during prayer together. Although the Bible can be used to support Islamic forms in prayer, such as prostration in prayer (Ezek 3:23; 9:8; Mar 14:35) and praying with one's eyes open,⁵³ the Bible gives strong admonitions against repetitive and ritualistic prayers (Matt 6:7-8). Additionally, *Salah* prayers pose a problem, since they require affirming the prophethood of Muhammad repetitively.⁵⁴ If *Salah* prayers are retained in any form, they will need to be modified to avoid syncretism.⁵⁵

The *Shahada*, which is central to *Salah* prayers, is also modified to be a declaration that there is one God and that we worship Him on His Sabbath. The first time Muslims

⁵³Parshall mentions that there are no biblical guidelines that suggest people should close their eyes in prayer. Parshall, *New Paths*, 202-203.

⁵⁴Whitehouse, "Issues of Identity," 124-125.

⁵⁵Parshall, *New Paths*, 202. Parshall suggests replacing qur'anic passages in the *Salah* prayers with biblical passages, and Muhammad with affirmation about Jesus. *Ibid.*, 202, 204. Osindo also sees the need for a Muslim to gradually come to the place where praying towards Mecca no longer becomes meritorious and he or she can join Christians in praying in any direction. Osindo, 201.

hear this variation of the *Shahada*, they may ask why Muhammad is not professed as the prophet of Allah. The Adventist missionary can kindly let his Muslim friend know that in the home fellowships, they do not want to associate any man with the worship of God, even Muhammad. Instead, the focus is coming before Allah on His day of worship and praising Him as the Creator.

Instead of practicing *Wudu*, or Islamic ritual cleansing, in home fellowships before the *Salah* prayer, a biblical alternative is implemented. A footwashing service points Muslims towards *Isa* (Jesus), who instituted footwashing as a reminder that humility is the road to the greatest honor (John 13:12-17). Only a humble heart can be pure and clean, and thus the footwashing service is a better preparation for entering Allah's presence through *Salah* than is *Wudu* (Jas 4:6-10). Unlike a traditional Adventist church that holds footwashing only once a quarter, footwashing is held every Sabbath at the home fellowship prior to the *Salah* prayers. During the footwashing, members are encouraged to intercede in prayer for each other. These special *Du'a* prayers create a spiritual bond of fellowship.

In order to follow the command of Jesus that prayers should not resemble vain repetition (Matt 6:7), the leader of the home fellowship selects different Psalms that praise God and offer Him thanksgiving each week. The leader leads the group in offering these prayers to God as all bow

together in Islamic-style prostration, and all repeat the prayers of praise together. Once the leader has finished leading the group in this biblical variation of *Salah* prayers, there is a time of silence where each participant can silently lift up personal *Du'a* prayers. The leader closes the prayer session with a final prayer to request God's blessing upon the group, at which point all sit quietly for the sermon.

The next thing that happens in the home fellowship is that the leader will give a sermon on the teachings of *Isa* (Jesus) or a biblical prophet. The teachings must not cover sensitive issues such as the Trinity or the prophethood of Muhammad, since Muslims who attend these home groups are just beginning to transition out of Islam. Instead, these sensitive issues are handled in personal Bible studies, which continue in addition to the home fellowship.

The final element in the home fellowship is a meal together that immediately follows the sermon. These fellowship meals allow for social interaction and deeper connections to be made within the group. It is important to note also that these home fellowships are either composed of only men or of only women and children. There are no mixed-gender home fellowships. The home fellowships should also carry the identity of an Adventist gathering, not an Islamic gathering.

Bible studies continue concurrently with the home fellowships, and the Muslim continues to grow in his or her

biblical understanding of Adventist doctrines. Muslims are shown that Jesus does not come to destroy pigs and crosses, but to take faithful believers to paradise. Jesus is shown as the One who has victory over the grave through the resurrection and that the true state of death is a sleep. An eternally burning hell is dismissed as incompatible with the idea that God alone is immortal and that death is the penalty of sin. The final topics that should be covered are the divinity of Jesus, the mystery of the Trinity, the personhood of the Holy Spirit, and the biblical test of a true prophet. These are perhaps the most difficult doctrines for Muslims to accept, so they are left to the very end. It should be noted that it may be a year or more before a Muslim is ready for these issues to be addressed. Those Muslims that receive Bible studies on all the fundamental doctrines of the Adventist Church are ready to transition into an Adventist ethnic fellowship in preparation for baptism.

Step 8: Adventist Ethnic Fellowship

The eighth step is moving from home fellowships into a Seventh-day Adventist ethnic fellowship. Once a Muslim is converted, it will be the support of friends in a fellowship that will help him or her continue to grow

spiritually.⁵⁶ Without this continued support and friendship, it is likely that he or she will slip back into Islam.⁵⁷

The differences between a home fellowship and an ethnic fellowship is that both men and women worship in the same building in an ethnic fellowship, it is a larger building with more people, there is a sign that clearly marks this as a Seventh-day Adventist fellowship, the singing of hymns is introduced, and the sermons include the full Adventist message. Although men and women worship in the same building in this ethnic church fellowship, women and children sit on one side and men sit on the other side. There are no pews or chairs, and the same footwashing ceremony practiced in the home fellowship is retained. Prayers are made in the same manner as they are made in the home fellowship, with the retention of the modified *Shahada* proclaiming the one true God and the Sabbath as His day of worship.

Prior to the sermon, culturally appropriate hymns are sung. These hymns do not include songs that reference the Crusades, battles, or the Christian church. Instead, the hymns should focus on *Isa* (Jesus), His coming, and the

⁵⁶Samuel Naaman, "Muslim Background Believers in North America: South Asian Muslim Background Believers," in *The Gospel for Islam*, eds. Roy Oksnevad and Dotsey Welliver (Wheaton, IL: Evangelism and Missions Information Service, 2001), 74.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, 76.

doctrinal truths of Scripture. Unlike a traditional Seventh-day Adventist church where instruments are played, these Adventist ethnic fellowships have no instruments. Instead, the hymns are sung or chanted in a culturally acceptable style.

The sermon is different from the home fellowship sermon in that it encompasses the full Adventist message. Islamic terms are retained, but Adventist theology from Genesis to Revelation is proclaimed. The writings of Ellen White are also shared as light from God, pointing believers toward Scripture. Although there is no elevated platform as in traditional Adventist churches, the leader of the Adventist ethnic fellowship does stand behind a pulpit to preach, while the members sit on the floor.

Step 9: Baptism and New Identity

The ninth step is baptism and acceptance of a Seventh-day Adventist identity. Once a Muslim believer who has accepted the Adventist doctrines begins attending the Adventist ethnic fellowship, he or she will begin baptismal studies with the local Adventist leader, who is an ordained minister in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. This local Adventist leader should make sure that the Muslims are "committed to all fundamental beliefs and related practices of the church and are prepared to assume the

responsibilities of church membership.”⁵⁸ It is also imperative that the Muslims renounce Muhammad as a prophet, since he fails the biblical test of a prophet, and Islam as a false religion, since its teachings are incompatible with the doctrines of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Once this private examination has occurred, a baptismal date should be set.

The baptism should occur on a Sabbath day during the regularly scheduled services in the Adventist ethnic fellowship. The baptismal candidate should make a public declaration of acceptance and commitment to all of the Seventh-day Adventist fundamental beliefs, a public commitment to support the Seventh-day Adventist Church and its mission, as well as a public acceptance of membership into the Seventh-day Adventist Church fellowship. Baptism by full immersion, administered by an ordained Seventh-day Adventist minister, should follow in the service.

Step 10: Discipleship Training

Baptism is not the final step in this synthesis of an appropriate Seventh-day Adventist approach to contextualization among Muslims. Jesus gave the imperative in the great commission to “make disciples of all nations.” This is the tenth and final step, to train newly baptized

⁵⁸General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists: *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing, 2005), 31.

converts from Islam to reach Muslims in the United States through personal evangelism. Once a former Muslim embraces his or her responsibility to evangelize, is connected with an Adventist fellowship, and is growing in his or her spiritual life through personal study of the Bible and prayer, the contextualization process is considered complete.

In conclusion, contextualization among Muslims in the United States requires a gradual progression towards an Adventist theology and identity. This may happen over a longer period of time than with other faith groups. It will also include a natural period of time where both Islamic and Adventist beliefs and practices are held together. This transition period could rightly be described as syncretistic, since the transition by nature requires a point in time when elements from both religions are held. However, this charge of syncretism should not be a barrier to following an appropriate contextualization model among Muslims, since syncretism is to some degree unavoidable. Instead, missionaries who follow a contextualized approach can claim the promise of God for Muslims that "He who continually goes forth weeping, bearing seed for sowing, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with Him" (Ps 126:6).

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In Chapter Two the beliefs and practices of Islam were surveyed. Their strongest belief centers on the oneness of God, and second to this is their faith in the prophethood of Muhammad and his revelations compiled in the Qur'an. Although American Muslims are diverse in their beliefs and practices, a majority hold to the doctrines of Islam. This is a real barrier that must be overcome. In addition, the negative viewpoints of Muslims towards Christians and Christians towards Muslims present a major barrier. However, American Muslims are less attached to institutional Islam, which gives an advantage to working with Muslims who may be more open to being reached through informal small groups.

In Chapter Three Muslim and Seventh-day Adventist beliefs were compared. Anti-trinitarian views and the Muslim belief in the prophethood of Muhammad are the biggest obstacles to reaching Muslims. However, Seventh-day Adventists also have many things in common that can serve as bridges to reaching Muslims. These include the shared belief in the Second Coming of Jesus, that God will judge the world, that Jesus' coming will be preceded by signs in nature, and that God has given prophets down through time to warn His people. We also share a concern for clean foods and modesty in dress, which sets Adventists apart from the typical view that Muslims have of Christians.

In Chapter Four the issues of contextualization and syncretism were considered from a biblical perspective. Both Jesus and the New Testament church set an example of contextualization which modeled incarnation, focusing on areas of agreement, and using pagan ideas, words, and elements as vehicles through which the gospel can be transmitted, as long as all of those elements do not contradict Scripture. Syncretism occurs when contextualization is either ignored or becomes the supreme focus over and above faithfulness to Scripture. Appropriate contextualization must find the balance between retaining as much of culture as possible while remaining faithful to the doctrines of Scripture. In the end, Muslims must not remain in the religion of Islam, but must accept biblical doctrines, renounce the unbiblical teachings of Islam, and be willing to take on a new identity as Seventh-day Adventists. Only when contextualization leads to this end is it appropriate.

In Chapter Five a synthesis of a contextualized approach for reaching Muslims was developed. Using the model of Jesus and the New Testament church, this approach begins where Muslims are and gradually leads them to embrace Adventist doctrines and eventually an Adventist identity. This approach is based on friendship evangelism that leads a person through a personal relationship towards Bible studies. These Bible studies continue into a small-group setting, which gradually transitions into a Seventh-

day Adventist ethnic fellowship. In this approach Muslim forms are retained to create an environment of worship that is more familiar to a Muslim, with slight modifications to make the forms biblically compatible. Syncretism is avoided by leading Muslims to embrace the full Adventist message, as well as an Adventist identity, while maintaining and redeeming as much of Islamic culture as is biblically appropriate.

My final conclusion is that American Muslims present a unique challenge and opportunity for Adventist evangelism. The relative freedom that Adventists have to share their faith in the United States and the absence of major geographical barriers gives Muslim evangelism in the United States an advantage over other more restrictive countries. In addition, many second- and third-generation Muslim immigrants speak English and have adopted much of the American culture and dress, which further removes barriers.

Muslims also share many beliefs in common with Adventists, which can aid in the initial stages of building trust and friendship that will lead towards personal Bible studies. The differences that exist in theology can be overcome by strategically leading Muslims to make small decisions in preparation for larger decisions. Differences in culture are not a barrier to appropriate contextualized approaches.

Although contextualization holds the risk of syncretism, avoiding contextualization also holds the risk

of syncretism. Contextualization is a non-negotiable essential of all approaches to missions among Muslims. The main question, then, is what constitutes appropriate contextualization.

Scripture provides both examples and principles that guide the formation of an appropriate contextualization strategy. Contextualization should seek to reach people through their language, their culture, and in their own geographic setting. Contextualization can use both non-biblical words and sources as vehicles to lead people towards biblical truth. However, appropriate contextualization must retain the doctrines of Scripture and requires total conversion and a new transcultural identity that leads to membership through baptism into the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

It is the conclusion of this paper that Faith Development in Context is an example of over-contextualization which leads to syncretism as a mission strategy by Seventh-day Adventists. Therefore, an appropriate Seventh-day Adventist contextualized approach among Muslims should not have C-5 types of ministries such as FDIC as an end goal. It is expected that an appropriate approach will begin where a Muslim is and gradually lead him or her out of Islam and towards an Adventist theology and identity. However, a transition period where syncretism is present for a short period of time is to be expected as a natural part of this transition. The ultimate goal is to

lead a Muslim to total conversion from Islam into God's remnant church, the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Due to lack of space, I could not include a full survey of current strategies being used to reach Muslims in the United States by Protestants and Catholics and how those strategies differ from a Seventh-day Adventist approach. In addition, future research is needed to field test the contextualization model provided in this paper among American Muslims. This future research should offer suggestions for time frames for a Muslim to transition between the various steps in this model, and whether this model needs to be a multi-generational approach.

APPENDIX A

ISSUES IN MUSLIM CONTEXTUALIZATION

Adventist mission faces unique challenges in contextualizing the gospel for a Muslim context. How those issues are resolved are reflected to a large degree in the differences between C-4 and C-5 approaches. By looking at the specific issues from a biblical perspective, the line of what constitutes appropriate contextualization becomes clearer. In this section the major issues in Muslim contextualization will be evaluated based on current C-5 and C-4 strategies.

Is Allah God?

One of the first issues that Adventists face in Muslim contextualization is whether or not the Muslim term for God, Allah, can be used in a contextualized approach.¹ Those opposed to using the term Allah for God rightly point out the vast differences between Allah and the God of the Bible.² As Kent says, "Islam, as a system of belief, does not contain a complete or wholly accurate portrayal of the character of God."³ In addition, a truly biblical

¹Pierson, 170. Parshall agrees, saying that even high-level scholars are divided on this issue. Parshall, *New Paths*, 141.

²Oosterwal, 188. Chatrath agrees. Nick Chatrath, *Reaching Muslims: A One-Stop Guide For Christians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Monarch Books, 2011), 100.

³John Kent, "Issues of Identity: Response to Jerald Whitehouse's paper," in *Faith Development in Context: Symposium Papers*, ed. Bruce L. Bauer (Berrien Springs, MI: Department of World Mission, Andrews University, 2005), 128. Samaan points out that inaccurate views of God also exist among Jews and Christians. Philip Samaan, *Abraham's Other*

understanding of God would include a belief in the Trinity, Christ's divine nature, and the personhood and work of the Holy Spirit, all of which Islam rejects.⁴ Even so, the name Allah is used by both Christians and Muslims in the Arabic world, one from a biblical view of God and the other from a qur'anic view of God.⁵

The Bible uses a common word for God which was used by pagans and other religions, *Theos*, over 1300 times and yet assigns a meaning that is different from the pagan meaning.⁶ The biblical model reveals that common words for God are neutral as long as biblical definitions are assigned and understood by everyone in the new Christian community.⁷ Thus, Allah can be used as a term for God with the understanding that a biblical view of God must replace the erroneous qur'anic view of God present in Islam.⁸ In the

Son: Islam Among Judaism and Christianity (Collegedale, TN: College Press, 2012), 102.

⁴Martin, "Biblical and Organizational," 20.

⁵Ibid. 20. Chatrath agrees that both Christians and Muslims use the term Allah as a generic term for God. Chatrath, 100. Samaan agrees. Samaan, *Abraham's Other Son*, 101. Parshall does not see the name for God as important as the definition of who God is. If a biblical definition is understood, then using Allah is fine. Parshall, *New Paths*, 142.

⁶Paulien, 237. Chatrath agrees. Chatrath, 100.

⁷Parshall, *New Paths*, 49. Pierson agrees, saying that theological terms need to be changed into Muslim-appropriate terms. Pierson, 333.

⁸Martin, "Biblical and Organizational," 20. Roennfeldt indicates that FDIC is supportive of learning about God and His activity through other religions. Roennfeldt, 41.

United States there may be some instances when a non-Arabic-speaking immigrant associates the term Allah only with the God of Islam. In such cases it might be better to avoid using the term Allah in order to avoid confusion.⁹

Is the Qur'an God's Word?

Another major issue faced in contextualization is how the Qur'an is viewed and used in mission. Muslims view the Qur'an as God's words¹⁰ and base their entire worldview on it.¹¹ Therefore, it is culturally important that Adventist missionaries approach the Qur'an with respect in order to reach Muslims.¹² However, the debate centers on whether or not Christians should use the Qur'an in their witness to Muslims.¹³

The use of the Qur'an in Adventist mission is crucial to understanding Muslim thoughts and viewpoints.¹⁴ As Oosterwal says, "there is no question that a thorough

⁹Chatrath, 103.

¹⁰Ganoune Diop, "The Use of the Qur'an in Sharing The Gospel: Promise or Compromise?" in *Faith Development in Context*, ed. Bruce Bauer (Berrien Springs, MI: Department of World Mission, Andrews University, 2005), 153.

¹¹Ibid., 163.

¹²Parshall, *New Paths*, 130.

¹³Diop, 152.

¹⁴Diop, 168. Oosterwal agrees but cautions that in some countries such as Egypt, Arabia, and Sudan, it is not permissible for non-Muslims to use the Qur'an. Oosterwal, 184.

knowledge and understanding of the Qur'an is *sine qua non* for all Muslim evangelism."¹⁵ The Adventist Church also accepts that the Qur'an can be used as a starting point from which a Muslim is gradually led to receive and accept the teachings and sole authority of Scripture.¹⁶

This, however, does not mean that the Qur'an is to be taken as another holy book or source of authority in addition to the Bible.¹⁷ The Bible and the Qur'an are theologically incompatible.¹⁸ If the Qur'an is used in Seventh-day Adventist evangelization strategies, "the Church should not use language that may give the impression that it recognizes or accepts the nature and authority assigned to the 'sacred writings' by the followers of

¹⁵Oosterwal, 185.

¹⁶General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Executive Committee, "Guidelines for Engaging in Global Mission" (June 1, 2003); <http://www.adventist.org/beliefs/guidelines/main-guide7.html> (accessed June 20, 2017). See also General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Executive Committee, "Roadmap for Mission," (October 13, 2009) <https://www.adventist.org/en/information/official-statements/documents/article/go/-/roadmap-for-mission/> (accessed June 20, 2017). Parshall agrees that the Qur'an can be used as a starting place. Parshall, *New Paths*, 137. FDIC also supports the use of the Qur'an. Roennfeldt, 40. See also Paulien, 240. Martin adds that "The transition from full acceptance of the Qur'an to full acceptance of the Bible may take years." Martin, "An Adventist Theology," 309. In addition, Roennfeldt says that Paul's model of reaching people through use of their sources of authority gives credence to using the Qur'an for missional purposes. Roennfeldt, 40.

¹⁷Oosterwal, 185.

¹⁸Diop, 170. Oosterwall agrees, saying that "No Muslim who believes the whole of the Qur'an can at the same time believe in the whole Bible." Oosterwal, 188.

specific non-Christian religions."¹⁹ Instead, the official position of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is that the Qur'an should only be used "in a deliberate attempt to introduce people to the Bible as the inspired Word of God and to help them transfer their allegiance to the Scriptures as the main source of faith and practice."²⁰ However, FDIC accepts the Qur'an as an inspired holy book alongside the Bible,²¹ where God's truth is believed to be equally revealed.²² Although there are points of truth that can be affirmed in the Qur'an, this researcher does not agree with the position taken by FDIC, since the Qur'an also teaches erroneous views that are opposed to biblical truths such as Jesus' divinity, the Trinity, the atonement of Christ, the fallen nature of humanity and their need for a Savior, the Sabbath, and the state of the dead.²³ By accepting this view, the FDIC model is embracing syncretism.

¹⁹General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Executive Committee, "Guidelines for Engaging in Global Mission."

²⁰General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Executive Committee, "Roadmap for Mission."

²¹Martin, "An Adventist Theology," 312. Whitehouse argues that FDIC continues to take the Bible as a primary guide. Whitehouse, "Issues of Identity," 114.

²²Roennfeldt, 37. Whitehouse agrees. Whitehouse, "Contextual Adventist Mission," 253-254.

²³See Isa 8:20; Prov 30:5-6. The *Seventh-day Adventist Church manual* states, "The Bible is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested." *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual* (2005), 15.

The *Shahada* and Muhammad

The *Shahada*²⁴ and Muhammad both hold a special place in Islam and should be approached with respect in missions to Muslims.²⁵ There are positive attributes and accomplishments in Muhammad's life which a Christian can emphasize without compromising while witnessing to Muslims.²⁶ However, the main issue is whether or not Muhammad can be affirmed as a true prophet.

Some Adventists accept both the *Shahada* and the prophethood of Muhammad,²⁷ while others are uncomfortable with accepting Muhammad as a true prophet.²⁸ The main reason for rejecting the prophethood of Muhammad is that he fails the biblical tests for a true prophet,²⁹ and his claim to be the last and final prophet cannot harmonize with the

²⁴The *Shahada* is the verbal recitation in Arabic "*La ilaha illa' wa Muhammadun Rasul Allah,*" which means "There is no deity but God and Muhammad is the Messenger of God." Alavi, 8.

²⁵Parshall, *New Paths*, 136. Osindo agrees, seeing how missionaries approach Muhammad as key to Christian and Muslim interactions. Oscar Osindo, "Relating to Mohammad and the Mosque," in *Faith Development in Context: Symposium Papers*, ed. Bruce L. Bauer (Berrien Springs, MI: Department of World Mission, Andrews University, 2005), 189.

²⁶Parshall, *New Paths*, 135-136.

²⁷Lester Merklin, "Relating to Muhammad and the Mosque: Response to Oscar Osindo's Paper," in *Faith Development in Context: Symposium Papers*, ed. Bruce L. Bauer (Berrien Springs, MI: Department of World Mission, Andrews University, 2005), 211.

²⁸Woodberry, 154.

²⁹Damsteegt, 254. Schantz would agree that accepting Muhammad as a prophet presents "obvious dangers." Schantz, "The Hanif Model," 8.

prophetic ministry of Ellen G. White.³⁰ For this reason, Adventists should disavow Muhammad as a genuine prophet, which would logically discredit the validity of proclaiming the *Shahada* as well. However, FDIC accepts not only the prophethood of Muhammad,³¹ but also the formal proclamation of the *Shahada* by non-Muslim workers.³² Once again, the FDIC model drifts into syncretism and thus cannot be accepted by Adventist mission. The *Shahada* could only be retained if it was modified by removing affirmations of Muhammad as a prophet and a biblically acceptable affirmation was inserted.

Issues in Mosque Attendance

Mosques are centers not only for worship but for cultural and social engagement in the Muslim world.³³ Unlike Christian churches, which are usually open only during services, mosques never close.³⁴ Does the need to preserve culture then justify the use of mosques by converted Muslims? Is it biblically permissible for a Muslim who is

³⁰Lumbard, 102. Dunton agrees. Dunton, 73.

³¹Schantz, "The Hanif Model," 7.

³²Whitehouse, "Issues of Identity," 122-123.

³³Merklin, 213.

³⁴Parshall, *New Paths*, 159. Parshall also says that the differences between Christian churches and Muslim mosques require a major adjustment for new converts. Ibid.

committed to Christ, as well as non-Muslim workers, to worship alongside Muslims in the mosque?

For FDIC the answer to these questions is a positive yes.³⁵ The example of Christ and the disciples worshipping in synagogues in Scripture is used to support worship in mosques.³⁶ Another scriptural support used by FDIC is Jesus' answer to the Samaritan woman in John 4, that true worship is not about a specific place. This has led some to assume that we can worship anywhere, including a mosque.³⁷

The mosque is a place where Islamic theology that is incompatible with Scripture is practiced and preached. The denial of Jesus' true identity and atonement,³⁸ the proclamation that the Bible is corrupted,³⁹ and the practice of corporate worship on Friday⁴⁰ instead of the true biblical Sabbath are all strong motivations for Seventh-day Adventists to require Muslim converts to separate from the mosque.⁴¹ To continue to worship in the mosque greatly

³⁵Whitehouse, "Contextual Adventist Mission," 254.

³⁶Robert M. Johnston, "Kingdom and Church," in *Faith Development in Context: Symposium Papers*, ed. Bruce L. Bauer (Berrien Springs, MI: Department of World Mission, Andrews University, 2005), 143.

³⁷Merklin, 213.

³⁸Schantz, *Islam in the Post 9/11 World*, 151.

³⁹Johnston, 144.

⁴⁰Poston, "You Must Not Worship," 251.

⁴¹Merklin disagrees with this conclusion, saying that the example of Namaan being allowed to diverge from God's ideal for true worship in Scripture supports Muslims worshipping in the mosque. Merklin, 214.

increases the potential for syncretism and regression in the spiritual life of Muslim converts.⁴²

One option, especially for work in the United States, is to establish Christian mosques⁴³ that would resemble ethnic churches.⁴⁴ Biblically permissible Islamic forms would be retained to accommodate for Islamic culture,⁴⁵ while maintaining a distinctive Adventist theology in a Christian mosque. Such an ethnic church could minister to the culture of Muslim immigrants, while preserving biblical beliefs and supporting the converts in a biblical community. House churches also provide an alternate option for Muslim converts.⁴⁶

Muslim and Missionary Identity

The issue of identity is at the core of the debate over FDIC-type ministries. The reason that identity is such an issue in mission is because a Christian identity holds such a negative view among Muslims.⁴⁷ Parshall says that "to

⁴²Poston, "You Must Not Worship," 252.

⁴³Parshall, *New Paths*, 159-160.

⁴⁴Metzger, 55.

⁴⁵Parshall, *New Paths*, 158-159. Flemming agrees that non-essential forms can be accepted as appropriate accommodation. Flemming, 200.

⁴⁶Poston, "You Must Not Worship," 253. Parshall agrees. Parshall, *New Paths*, 229. Bauer also supports house churches, saying they are difficult to shut down. Bauer, "Maintaining Unity," 269.

⁴⁷Woodberry, 149.

become a Christian is to be a traitor to one's heritage, family, and nation. Almost nothing else could bring greater negative social reaction."⁴⁸ In addition, Muslims believe that only those who identify as Muslim can enter heaven; therefore, taking a non-Muslim identity is a mental barrier for Muslims.⁴⁹

There are movements in mission that are seeking to leave Muslim cultural identity intact.⁵⁰ The Jerusalem Council in Acts 15,⁵¹ as well as Paul's admonition that each is to remain as they are (1 Cor 7:17-24), is used as a basis for leaving the Muslim culture intact.⁵² Muslim Background Believers identify themselves culturally with Islam, but theologically identify themselves as Bible-based believers in Isa.⁵³ Some have chosen to take on the name and identity of a *Hanif* in order to identify outside of Islam

⁴⁸Parshall, *New Paths*, 224. Woodberry says that Islam is not only a religious identity, but also a cultural, political, familial, and national identity. Woodberry, 149. Roennfeldt agrees, adding his view that conversion to Christianity shuts down spiritual growth and opportunities for witnessing within Islam. Roennfeldt, 44.

⁴⁹Oksnevad, 107.

⁵⁰Whitehouse, "Issues of Identity," 109.

⁵¹Paulien, 238-239.

⁵²Whitehouse, "Issues of Identity," 109.

⁵³Roennfeldt, 36. Whitehouse mentions that some FDIC members no longer identify themselves as traditional Muslims. Whitehouse, "Issues of Identity," 116.

but remain culturally Muslim.⁵⁴ However, MBB's often face persecution because of their new theological identity, which requires some to flee for their lives.⁵⁵

For this reason and others, some FDIC members do not see themselves as outside Islam, but as traditional Muslims, called Muslim Believers.⁵⁶ Their beliefs may reflect Adventist beliefs in some areas, but they fully identify as religiously and culturally Muslim.⁵⁷ Roennfeldt summarizes the description of this group by saying, "Truth is lived and experienced in the Muslim setting by one who speaks, eats, talks, thinks, feels, dresses, marries, hurts, rejoices, honors, gives, prays, worships and grows spiritually as a Muslim."⁵⁸ This identity is more than simply a cultural identity, for to pray, worship, and grow spiritually as a Muslim involves fully embracing the religion of Islam. Again, the identity assumed by FDIC members within the religion of Islam is unmistakably syncretistic, and unacceptable for Adventist mission.

⁵⁴Woodberry, 150. Whitehouse suggests that *Hanif* can be an identity that Adventists may assume while in a Muslim context. Whitehouse, "Issues of Identity," 102.

⁵⁵Roennfeldt, 36.

⁵⁶Whitehouse, "Issues of Identity," 116. Roennfeldt, 36.

⁵⁷Paulien, 219.

⁵⁸Roennfeldt, 38.

Since identifying as a Christian raises unnecessary prejudice, it would be wise for workers among Muslims to identify themselves in an alternative way.⁵⁹ Initially, a worker can follow Jesus' model of concealing one's true identity until the truth can be revealed without the unnecessary barriers of prejudice (Luke 9:21-22; 24).⁶⁰ Concealment must not be a strategy of deception, for all deception is of the devil (John 8:44). Jesus only concealed His identity until the truth could be revealed, and then He also revealed who He was (Luke 24:15-21).

FDIC goes further than this and encourages workers to incarnate into the Muslim cultural and religious context.⁶¹ The long-term vision of FDIC is for Muslims who are not members of the Adventist Church to implant Adventist beliefs within Islam.⁶² At this stage the missionary not only takes the identity of a Muslim, but denies the identity of Seventh-day Adventist or Christian.⁶³ This is

⁵⁹Paulien, 228. Kent agrees. Kent, 129. Parshall also agrees. Parshall, *New Paths*, 164. Whitehouse adds that avoiding any association to the Crusades is critical. Whitehouse, "Issues of Identity," 103.

⁶⁰Whitehouse, "Issues of Identity," 108.

⁶¹Roennfeldt, 36.

⁶²Whitehouse, "Issues of Identity," 123.

⁶³Ibid. Whitehouse, "Contextual Adventist Mission," 249. Lepke adds that the Seventh-day Adventist chairperson of the FDIC ministry in a Muslim country officially becomes a Muslim. Wolfgang Lepke, "An Evaluation of a Contextual Witnessing Project Within a Resistant People Group," (PhD dissertation, School of Education, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI, 2001), 190, 231, 305.

far beyond what Paul had in mind when in 1 Corinthians 9:19-22 he says, "to the Jew I became a Jew,"⁶⁴ and has essentially become reverse conversion.

Religious Identity and the Remnant

The main issue in the debate over FDIC and ministries that resemble a C-5 approach is the view taken regarding the identity of the Church and other world religions. A low view of Scripture has led some to see Islam and other world religions as valid paths to God.⁶⁵ It is true that there are gems of truth scattered among all groups of people and that God has not left anyone without a witness, for nature itself reveals the God of heaven (Rom 1:19-20).⁶⁶ However, FDIC holds to the belief that other religions should not be viewed as under the judgment of God.⁶⁷ Instead, according to FDIC, truth is revealed through other religions.⁶⁸

FDIC sees God's people as part of a global movement that transcends the visible Seventh-day Adventist Church.⁶⁹

⁶⁴Martin, "Biblical Perspectives," 3.

⁶⁵Poston, "The Current State of Islam," 15.

⁶⁶Roennfeldt, 37.

⁶⁷Ibid., 41.

⁶⁸John McVay, "Faith Development in Context—An Overview: Response to Peter Roennfeldt's Paper," in *Faith Development in Context: Symposium Papers*, ed. Bruce L. Bauer (Berrien Springs, MI: Department of World Mission, Andrews University, 2005), 51.

⁶⁹Roennfeldt, 44. Whitehouse agrees. Whitehouse, "Issues of Identity," 101-102. Kent also sees the visible Adventist Church as part of a historical movement larger than itself. Kent, 129. Dybdahl agrees,

This viewpoint is used to give validity to finding this global movement in other faith groups. As Whitehouse puts it, "We affirm that within Islam there are such people of authentic faith sincerely concerned about their submission to the One true God, their preparation for the day of judgment, but lacking a certainty of salvation."⁷⁰ Therefore, instead of calling people out of Islam, FDIC is "encouraging spiritual development as a sincere Muslim believer."⁷¹ FDIC builds on what it labels as truths within Islam, leading to biblical truth.⁷² FDIC envisions the Adventist message as being added to the structure, community, and teachings of other religions.⁷³

The dividing line in the debate is whether or not Islam is viewed as an entirely false religion or simply misguided and in need of correction.⁷⁴ FDIC takes the latter position and views Islam as misguided, but still a true religion. However, Islam must be viewed as a false

saying that the visible Adventist Church is not the Advent movement. Dybdahl, "Doing Theology," 16.

⁷⁰Whitehouse, "Issues of Identity," 120.

⁷¹Roennfeldt, 39. Paulien quotes 1 Corinthians 7:17-20 in support of this spiritual movement being a part of the established church structure. Paulien, 240-241.

⁷²Roennfeldt, 38. Whitehouse agrees. Whitehouse, "Contextual Adventist Mission," 245.

⁷³Dybdahl, "Doing Theology," 16.

⁷⁴Paulien, 241.

religion, based on its unbiblical teachings regarding God, Jesus, the Bible, prophets, sin, salvation, the day of worship, and many other important doctrinal truths.⁷⁵ Muslim converts and mission workers alike must fully abandon the position that Islam is a valid path to God and accept the Bible as the only authority for faith and practice.⁷⁶ In an authentic and biblical contextualized approach, Muslims must take a new religious identity.⁷⁷ This means that in Adventist missions, a Muslim will identify as a member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Another major challenge to C-5 missions within the Seventh-day Adventist Church is the fundamental doctrine of the remnant church.⁷⁸ This unique view is based on the Church's historic eschatological view that God has positioned the Seventh-day Adventist movement with a distinctive message to call men and women out of the false

⁷⁵Poston, "The Current State of Islam," 16. Kent agrees, saying that Islam is a religious system in error and must be confronted. Kent, 130.

⁷⁶Kent, 131.

⁷⁷Ibid.

⁷⁸Damsteegt, 190-192. The identity of the remnant church is revealed through the specific characteristics mentioned in the apocalyptic book of Revelation. The remnant will have faith in Jesus and His Word, they will keep the commandments of God, and they will have the special guidance of the Spirit of Prophecy. "Such prophetic guidance makes the remnant a people of prophecy who proclaim a prophetic message." Ibid., 191. Woodberry agrees that remnant theology is significant for C-5 insider movements. Woodberry, 151.

religions of the world into God's remnant church.⁷⁹ For FDIC, however, there is not one remnant but many at the end of time.⁸⁰ Dybdahl summarizes this view by saying that "a subtle shift has taken place in the mind of some who have begun to see the remnant as any from all backgrounds who respond to the remnant message."⁸¹ They view remnants among Hindus, Buddhists, seculars, and Muslims that are not connected with the Seventh-day Adventist Church.⁸² They also view no unity among the various remnant groups until the Second Coming of Jesus.⁸³

FDIC views of a remnant in other faith groups do not harmonize with the remnant theology of the Adventist Church, since other faith systems are viewed as false.⁸⁴ There is only one final visible end-time remnant church in

⁷⁹Damsteegt, 192-197. "The message of the fall of Babylon is repeated in Revelation 18:2-4, which announces the complete downfall of Babylon and calls on those of God's people who are still in various religious bodies comprising Babylon to separate from them." Ibid., 195.

⁸⁰Roennfeldt, 43-44. In agreement, Dybdahl adds that the Sabbath and Second Coming are part of the message that produces a remnant in other faiths. Dybdahl, "Doing Theology," 15.

⁸¹Dybdahl, "Doing Theology," 15.

⁸²Whitehouse, "Contextual Adventist Mission," 257. Dybdahl agrees. Dybdahl, "Doing Theology," 15. Roennfeldt, 43. Whitehouse, "Issues of Identity," 115.

⁸³Whitehouse, "Contextual Adventist Mission," 258. Martin disagrees with the FDIC view, saying that Adventists understand a single end-time remnant existing before the Second Coming, according to Revelation 12:17. Martin, "An Adventist Theology," 303.

⁸⁴Kent, 131.

Adventist theology.⁸⁵ In addition, Adventist mission cannot accept other remnants and remain authentic.⁸⁶ This is because "the full mystery of the gospel cannot be experienced apart from full participation in the multi-ethnic, transnational, cross-cultural community of the church."⁸⁷ This does not mean that besides the visible remnant an invisible church does not exist.⁸⁸ Scripture testifies that there are people whom God will save who are outside the visible church (John 10:16; Rom 9:6; Rev 18:4). Scripture is also clear that God desires for members of false religions to be grafted into a single unified transcultural remnant body of believers prior to the Second Coming of Jesus (Eph 2:14-16; Rom 9-11).⁸⁹

Parallel Structures

Although Seventh-day Adventists have a strong remnant theology, church administrative structure should

⁸⁵McVay, 53. Kent agrees, saying, "we must never create two separate remnants. There will only ever be one remnant people of God." Kent, 132.

⁸⁶Lowell Cooper, "Maintaining Unity With Parallel Structures: Response to Bruce Bauer's Paper," in *Faith Development in Context: Symposium Papers*, ed. Bruce L. Bauer (Berrien Springs, MI: Department of World Mission, Andrews University, 2005) 276.

⁸⁷McVay, 53.

⁸⁸Johnston, 142. Martin says that "Seventh-day Adventists define the church as both invisible and visible . . . as both a spiritual movement and an organized body." Martin, "An Adventist Theology," 302.

⁸⁹Lowell Cooper, 276-277. McVay adds that Pauline ecclesiology does not picture a divided body of believers, but a united remnant at the end. McVay, 53.

accommodate mission.⁹⁰ However, that accommodation should not produce a separate religious or administrative structure independent of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Seventh-day Adventist Church policy states that “[God] has not established parallel or multiple tracks for us to follow, which is to say, we should all be committed to the same beliefs and be organized and work in harmony with the world Church.”⁹¹ This view is in harmony with Scripture, which reveals a unified people of God in a single remnant body (Gen 12:1-3; Deut 7:6-8; Rom 11:17-24; Rom 11:5; Rev 12:17). White is also in harmony with this view, stating,

There is but one church in the world who are at the present time standing in the breach. . . . God has a distinct people, a church on earth, second to none, but superior to all in their facilities to teach the truth, to vindicate the law of God.⁹²

Although no alternative structures independent of the Seventh-day Adventist Church are to be formed, current policy does allow for transitional groups under special circumstances and with the approval of church

⁹⁰Lowell Cooper, 276. Bauer states that the need for such an accommodation in church structure was demonstrated in Vietnam, where because of political persecution, the Adventist Church could not formally work, and a parallel structure was established. Bauer, “Maintaining Unity,” 269. Parshall also sees this as a need in various Muslim countries where the Church can not officially work. Parshall, *New Paths*, 160.

⁹¹General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Executive Committee, “Roadmap for Mission.”

⁹²Ellen G. White, *Last Day Events* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1992), 43.

administration.⁹³ Previous church policy also had provisions for "variation in denominational structure. *General Conference Working Policy* B05.35."⁹⁴ However, a loophole in the policy allowed for transitional groups to continue apart from the Seventh-day Adventist Church for an indefinite period of time.⁹⁵ In order to close up that loophole, the new policy now states that transitional groups should "lead people into membership in the Seventh-day Adventist Church within a deliberate time plan."⁹⁶ Cooper wisely states that "the Church needs to be appropriately cautious about formalizing structural innovations that compromise its sense of identity and calling when such features work their way into the large dimensions of denominational life."⁹⁷

Baptism and Church Membership

Another major issue in Muslim mission is baptism and church membership. This is because almost all Muslims

⁹³General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Executive Committee, "Roadmap for Mission."

⁹⁴Lowell Cooper, 279.

⁹⁵General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Executive Committee, "Guidelines for Engaging in Global Mission." Martin sees a loophole in Adventist policy in the phrase "as soon as it is feasible." Martin, "Biblical and Organizational Models," 6.

⁹⁶General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Executive Committee, "Roadmap for Mission."

⁹⁷Lowell Cooper, 278.

misunderstand baptism to mean that one is joining an immoral group of filthy Christians, thus betraying family and friends.⁹⁸ Despite this negative outlook, baptism is a non-negotiable requirement for church membership.⁹⁹ All authentic missions should lead people to accept the message of salvation and join other believers in church membership through baptism.¹⁰⁰

What are the requirements of baptism? According to Scripture, there is only one form that baptism can take, and that is full immersion in water (Eph 4:5; John 3:23).¹⁰¹ Baptism must be understood as entrance into church membership (Acts 2:4). In addition, the doctrinal teachings of the Seventh-day Adventist Church must be accepted prior to baptism (Matt 28:19-20).¹⁰² However, some have been baptized by FDIC workers without knowledge that they were joining the Adventist Church or a complete understanding of

⁹⁸Parshall, *New Paths*, 190.

⁹⁹Johnston, 141. Parshall, a non-Adventist, agrees, but suggests it might take another form other than water baptism to accommodate for Muslims. Parshall, *New Paths*, 195. I agree that baptism is necessary prior to church membership, but disagree with Parshall's conclusions that other forms of baptism are acceptable, since there is only one form outlined in Scripture.

¹⁰⁰Escobar, 104. It is important to note that baptism must not simply be a baptism "in Christ," but baptism must be understood as entrance into church membership.

¹⁰¹This is the only form of baptism that must be used in Muslim evangelism (Eph 4:5; Matt 3:16; Acts 8:38).

¹⁰²*Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual* (2005), 30.

the doctrines.¹⁰³ Baptism of Muslims should only occur once they fully accept the doctrines and the mission and agree to hold their membership in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.¹⁰⁴

In conclusion, FDIC has fundamental goals that are out of harmony with the Seventh-day Adventist Church's mission and its own identity. Perhaps elements of FDIC could be used as strategies to reach Muslims where they are, but the end goal can not be to simply create more committed Muslims. Islam as a religion and Islamic beliefs represent a false religion and a false system of beliefs. It is to Muslims both in the United States and around the world that the call from heaven in Revelation 18:4 applies, "Come out of her my people, lest you share in her sins." Any contextualized approach that neglects this call to leave false religious systems such as Islam and their false teachings is treading into the waters of syncretism.

¹⁰³Martin, "Biblical and Organizational Models," 17.

¹⁰⁴Ibid., 15. *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual* (2005), 30.

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